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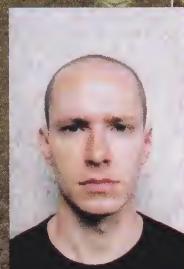
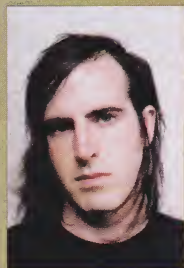
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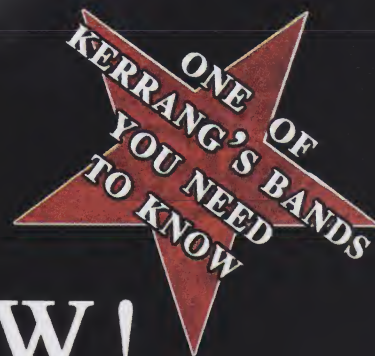
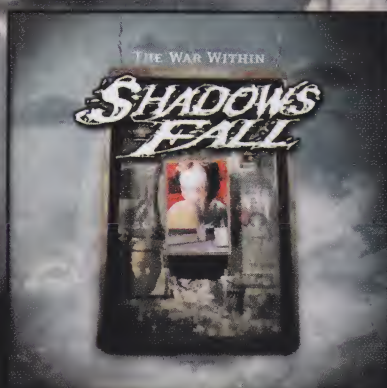
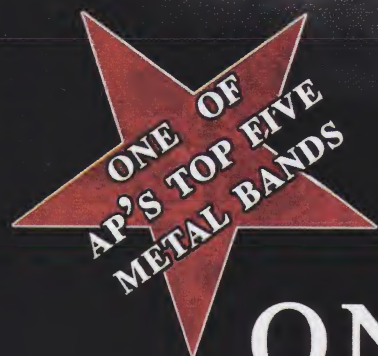
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issue #21

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Law of Inertia ISSN# 1543-7191 is a division of Law of Inertia Productions LLC. Law of Inertia is published bi-monthly out of New York City. All content is © 2004 and may not be reproduced without written permission.

National and international newsstand distribution through Rider Circulation Services— www.gorcs.com.



323.344.1200

Subscriptions: (6 issues per year) United States/\$19.95; Canada/\$30; International/\$50; (12 issues per 2 years) United States/\$35; Canada/\$50; International/\$85

Online subscriptions and single issue sales at www.lawofinertia.com.

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I wanna rock right now, we're *Law of Inertia* and we came to get down. Ladies love us, girls adore us, even the ones that never saw us like....

Editor's Missive

Dear Party People,

Here we are, doing it all over again, finishing an issue for the 21st time. It never ceases to excite me to write the editor's note in each issue, 'cause it's the very last thing I do. As soon as I press save and send this note off, we'll have closed the book on another issue of *Law of Inertia*. And I couldn't be any happier.

I know I say this every issue—I wouldn't be much of a magazine publisher if I didn't—but this is the best issue we have ever done. Seriously. No doubt about it. Every piece of writing in this magazine is awesome, every single photo is stunning, every gadget we reviewed is super hot, and every record we reviewed...well, every record we reviewed we listened to thoroughly. But really, I am so happy with this issue.

You might have noticed this is kind of a special issue. For the first time, to my knowledge, a magazine is releasing an exclusive full length CD in its pages at no extra cost. The band that brought this to you is the magnificently outspoken, The Rise. Their record: the body-rockin' *Reclamation Process*. Cory Kilduff, our art director and singer for The Rise helped us edit this issue, much like Roseanne Arnold assisted in editing an issue of *The New Yorker* in the '90's. Thankfully, the same fate did not befall us (over 20 of their staff members quit the magazine in protest and people like my parents didn't even notice the commotion) as it did them, and things went relatively smoothly as a result.

This issue is filled with inspirational artists, both visual and musical, who we felt were in league with The Rise's political views, and the opinions expressed on *Reclamation Process*. Whether it be the unstoppable Dillinger Escape Plan, the punk-rocker-cum-business-man ways of Fat Mike, the anthemic rhymes of The Coup, or the frantically irresistible pop-rock of My Chemical Romance, we felt all these artists have something interesting to say, are doing something different, and should be highlighted in an issue devoted to those who are trend-setters rather than simply trendy.

Like every issue, I've learned a lot about myself, as has my staff... I think. But we had a good time doing this, didn't almost kill each other like last issue, and are working hard towards bringing you another fine edition of *Law of Inertia*—the project that won't make us rich, but will make us fulfilled and inspired. Making a magazine is a great reason to get up in the morning. And, as you'll find in this issue, music is as well.

Love,
Ross Siegel
Editor In Chief

CONTRIBUTORS



Genevieve Kessler: *Big Red/Fire Starter*

Yes, it's true: Genevieve—or Lousky, as she's known—is a fantastic photographer. So it made perfect sense that she would get to fire questions at Michael Light for the Flash section this issue. Only a woman with unmatched grace under fire could deal with such an incredibly difficult guy. Sure, all artists are assholes but Lousky knows how to handle each and every one of them. And she does so without blowing her cool, popping her top, or becoming one of the explosions for which her subject is famous.



Jay Zaretsky: *Contributing Writer*

Jay showed up at our office with an bottle of brandy and a package of condoms and claimed it was a press-kit for the group the manages, Phoenix And The Shadow. While we couldn't find a CD in the envelope, our interns came up with some creative uses for the goodies. Jay is a regular contributor to *FLO Multizine* and interviewed The Coup for this issue.



Nadine Cheung: *Contributing Writer*

By day Nadine fuels the corporate ogre, but come the weekend she tames a different kind of beast. An avid surfer and self-proclaimed adrenaline junkie, Ms. Cheung has braved tides that would put some of the sport's top names to shame. She writes about MC Lars for this issue because she feels that white-boy MC's and emo punk just don't get enough media coverage these days, much like hang-gliding.



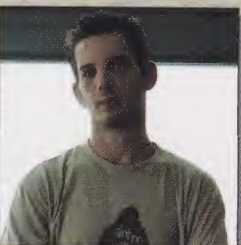
Tracey John: *Contributing Writer*

Ms. John's article on her adventures at MGM Studio's Star Wars Weekend almost prevented the last issue of *Law of Inertia* from coming out on time. We had trouble concentrating long enough between fits of laughter. A self-proclaimed superfan, she nearly peed her shorts when we asked her to write about Dillinger Escape Plan for this issue's cover story. She then screamed like a Beatles fan circa 1966 during the interview. Fortunately, Dillinger Escape Plan is used to that kind of excitement.



Ryan Shankel: *The Don King of Cock Fighting*

The product of a poor prom night decision, if it wasn't for Lucky Lager and fake IDs, Ryan Shankel wouldn't even exist. Although bitter about the fact that he invented the Moonwalk years before Michael Jackson, Ryan's not one to let life get him down. Plans for the future? "I stop cutting my fingernails this week. See you in the pages of Guinness!"



Michael Flack: *Lover/Photographer*

Mr. Flack is a Chicago based photographer and documentarian. for the last several years he has dutifully captured and chronicled the distinctive and varying elements of underground culture, from street level art to musical tastemakers and then a bit of everything in between. This issue he shoots Steve Albini 'cause he loves Nirvana and so does Steve.



Winni Wintermeyer: *Contributing Photographer*

Winni is German and lives in San Francisco, but he's still radical. He shot The Coup for us and man were we impressed. In addition, he designed the cover art of Tom Waits' *Blood Money* record, which is awesome 'cause everyone loves Tom Waits and I'm sure his people paid Winni way better than *Law of Inertia* paid Winni. Winni has also shot for *Paper Magazine*, *Red Herring*, and the promotional shots for your favorite indie record labels.

LUBBOCK IS FOR LOVERS

Dear Law of Inertia,
Your last issue rocked. It really did. The picture of the cover with the tank shooting out the hearts was awesome. Made me think of a "flower revolution" in which all the bad men of the world simply laid down their power and succumbed to the masses brandishing bouquets of flowers instead of pitchforks, or rifles, or whatever hippie peasants revolt with these days. The one thing that dragged the cover down was Taking Back Sunday. That band sucks. If they came to my college to play it wouldn't be a bloodless coup or a flowerless revolution or something. It would be all out war in which those pretty boys got hurt... bad. Cool to see Rilo' Kiley next to Killswitch Engage though. Good work. Your rag is the shit.

Dave Brown,
Lubbock, TX

Google Search: "Dave Brown Lubbock TX" yields—

- Dave Brown: Percussion and vocals in the band Groovin' Ground
- American-style Ale (6 entries) Bronze— Anonymous Ale, Dave Brown, Santa Fe, NM – 30
- HBBC Vice-President - Pastor Dave Brown - Yakima Bible Baptist Church

Google Search: "Flower Revolution Bloodless Coup" yields—

- Crikey - Rugby revolution masks bloodless coup
- Portugal Remembers "Revolution of the Carnations"
- Mentspace: Let them stay in Georgia long

Synopsis: Dave Brown of Lubbock, TX failed high school history, is going to fail college history, and will become a male prostitute.

OAK PARK IS FOR ASSES

Dear Law of Inertia,
Um, who are the Billionaires For

Bush? Are they really really snotty people from Brooklyn who think it's "cool" to make fun of George Bush and dress up like really really rich people? Thanks. Like we haven't heard that one before: making for on the president is so gauche. Let's all move on to the next trend, like emo-ska or pop-core. Your magazine would be a whole lot better if it wasn't such a band-wagon jumper.

Eric Young,
Oak Park, IL

Google Search: "Eric Young Oak Park IL" yields—

- Urology Park Ridge, Illinois Vasectomy Reversal, Penile Implants...
- Illinois Dance Therapists: Dance is effective
- Oak Park Temple on the Web: Even Madonna reads Kabala

Google Search: "really really" yields—

- 'Gigli' is really, really bad. It's better than 'Swept Away,' for what it's worth.
- Really, Really Bad Theology
- im really bored.com :: ambiguously addictive

Synopsis: Eric Young of Oak Park, IL needs his urethra checked. He was so bored while dancing his worries away that he became addicted to Kabala.

KISS YOUR SAN FRANCISCO

Dear Law of Inertia,
Where can I get your magazine in San Francisco? I've looked everywhere but they only have it at Booksmith, Amoeba, Green Apple, Virgin Megastore, Tower Records, and I don't have a car so it's hard for me to get to those places. I love your magazine. Can you get me a list of where I can find Law of Inertia in San Francisco? Oh yeah, the first time I kissed my boyfriend was when we were both reading Law of Inertia.

Lisa Kim,
San Francisco, CA

Google Search: "Lisa Kim San Francisco" yields—

- Photos of 40 Naked Skaters in San Francisco
- University of Dreams
- To the best of our knowledge: Japanese food kills

Google Search: "Green Apple Virgin" yields—

- Green Pussy recipe
- Virgin gets taste for Apple iPod

· How to set up your virgin

Synopsis: Lisa Kim of San Francisco, CA listens to Britney Spears on her iPod. That slut.

ALBUQUERQUE CHEATED ON ME

Dear Law of Inertia,
Your Top Ten Crack Heads article was pretty fucking funny. After studying Burroughs, Kerouac, and the rest of the beatniks back in my senior year of high school, no teacher ever told me that William Burroughs shot his wife in the head during a game of William Tell. I've done all sorts of drugs, but never once attempted to kill my girlfriend. She has cheated on me, though.

John Kearny,
Albuquerque, NM

Google Search: "John Kearny Albuquerque NM" yields—

- National Church Arson Task Force
- In Liberty & Freedom: More Mexicans
- The Goat Locker

Google Search: "shot his wife in the head" yields—

- Vanilla Ice's mug shot
- Chapter 32 groin pull
- Bladder-Head boy

Synopsis: John Kearny of Albuquerque, NM has a cheater on his hands, a bladder the size of a walnut, and an agonizing groin pull. We suggest you fix that sucker with some ice, ice baby.

Please direct all letters to letters@lawofinertia.com. Note: all letters, e-mails, or telegrams sent to Law of Inertia become property of Law of Inertia and can and will be used against you in a court of law.

LETTERS

answered by the interns



DROWNINGMAN LEARN TO LET IT GO



THE DEMOS

The northeast's most dangerous hardcore band with their first release in two years. This collection of unreleased tracks spans their blistering musical career which saw pivotal records on Hydra Head, Revelation, and Equal Vision. *Learn To Let It Go* cements their spot at the top of the genre with contemporaries being Converge, Botch, Cave In, and Dillinger Escape Plan. See them slay the crowd as they headline the second stage at Hell Fest 2004. See them on tour with Dillinger Escape Plan. See them rip your head off.

IN STORES NOW!

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SIGN OF THE TIMES

BEN SNAKEPIT and his... DAILY GRIND

Snakepit is a three-panel comic strip drawn every day that documents both the exciting and the mundane. The book is a collection of the last three years worth of comics. It is available through Gorsky Press (www.gorskypress.com).

How have you been able to keep ordinary tasks like going to work, doing laundry, and band practice interesting? What's the appeal?

Beats me! I think it's because I smoke weed so much. Smoking weed makes doing nothing feel like doing something, so I guess I can make that come across in the comics. I don't know about [the appeal]. I used to see my next door neighbors having sex sometimes, and my roommate and me would think it was funny, but we didn't do anything weird like beat off.

What is the screening process for what gets included in each comic strip?

I try to think of the most interesting or funniest stuff I did that day. Sometimes when I don't do anything interesting or fun, I have to kind of stretch it out. It's always a cool challenge.

Have you ever missed a day and had to go back and remember what you did and write it down?

Actually, I was just recently traveling and didn't have my sketchbook with me for three weeks! I just took notes and wrote out the scripts, and when I got home I had a lot of drawing to do. That's the first time that has ever happened.

Does your life imitate your art or vice versa?

It's gone so far beyond that. My life has become my art, and vice versa. I now find myself making decisions in real life based solely on how it's gonna look in the comic. I don't know if that's healthy or not, but it's true.



Have you and Slash ever come head-to-head over rights to the name Snakepit?

No, but if he tried to sue me or something I'd be kind of stoked because it would mean I'd get to meet Slash.



TURF WARS >> THE TWO GALLANTS

Location: San Francisco, CA

Members: Adam Stephens (vocals/guitar/harmonica), Tyson Vogel (drums/vocals)

Releases: *The Throes* (Alive)

Influences: Murder By Death, Van Morrison, Matt Pond PA, Bob Dylan

The Goods: One would think that any talented and unique musicians in San Francisco would find it easy to garner recognition and acclaim given the region's storied musical history. However, with so much competition and so few places to see all-ages rock and roll, the task is an arduous one. Enter The Two Gallants, a duo who have managed to amass a respectable following as a folk-rock act in a town best known for its punk rock and techno scenes. By mixing punk rock and a more rootsy, blues-based sound the band has succeeded in turning heads and has clearly risen above the pack.

"We play in front of a lot of different people," says singer/lyricist Adam Stephens of his band's following. "Our parents come to every show and bring their friends, so there is a lot of in-between," Stephens says of the diverse age range of a typical Two Gallants show. When one considers that rock and roll, teenage rebellion, and hating your parents go hand-in-hand it seems odd that any parents, much less their friends would be interested in the band's music. After one thorough listen to their debut record, however, Stephens' statement makes a lot more sense. The songs off *The Throes* are raw, under-produced, and energetic like the latter-day meanderings of The Black Keys or The White Stripes, while harkening back to Van Morrison, and

yes, Bob Dylan, as well. So, it makes sense that the baby-boom generation would find solace in Stephen's melancholy wail.

"I think it is inevitable with the harmonica and our so-called folkly style that the Bob Dylan comparisons come out," Adam starts off. "The way I see it, someone gets compared to Bob Dylan every single day. I don't mind it. But touching upon that genius is, yes, an honor, but also a joke because it comes from people who don't have anything else to latch our music onto." Still, with so many younger bands these days looking back to the '60's and early-'70's for inspiration, Dylan isn't a bad place to start when looking for a creative inspiration.

Of course, The Two Gallants realize there is only one way to make it in the music business, and that is to get out on the road and tour. "We've gone back and forth across the country three times," drummer Tyson Vogel chimes in. "We've played some good shows. We feel honored that people have been receptive and come out to see us." If the packed house the band recently drew to New York City's club Planos is any indication, the reception has been quite warm.

With a successful record putting wind in their sails, the duo has high hopes and big plans for the future. Rockstardom? Groupies? Drugs and fancy cars? Not quite. "We have a whole bunch of material we want to record," Vogel says shyly. "It's organic. We're trying to play as much as we can and practice as much as possible and see where it all goes." Spoken like a true gallant. [SB]

ALL THE NEWS THAT'LL FIT

Taking Back Sunday recently celebrated the release of their new album, *Where You Want To Be*, with a spot in the top three of the Billboard Top 200. The record sold over 150,000 copies its first week. Time to dust off those old Path Of Resistance records, Victory is officially out of the basement... Sub Pop has signed Low. They are at work on their seventh

full length at press time... **Ferret Music** has signed **The Banner** and **A Life Once Lost**... Tom Morello of **Rage Against The Machine** and Serj Tankian of **System Of A Down** will be releasing a live CD/DVD of their **Axis Of Justice** project. The politically charged group features guest appearances by members of Tool, Chris Cornell, and Flea of The Red Hot Chili Peppers among others... **Turbonegro** are getting ready to head into the studio to record their sixth LP, the follow-up to last year's *Scandinavian Leather*... **Slayer** will be releasing a DVD this fall entitled *Still Reigning*. Included is footage of an entire performance of their landmark

SCENE POINTS: FUN FACTS TO IMPRESS YOUR FRIENDS

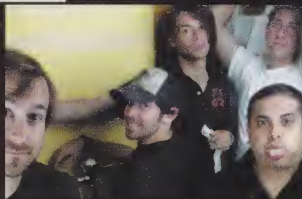
album *Reign In Blood*. They will also be headlining this year's Jagermeister tour with **Killswitch Engage** and **Mastodon** supporting. Very heavy. Very metal... **Revelation Records**'s own **Pitch Black** are currently in the studio putting the finishing touches on their next album. Expect more creepy **AFI**-inspired hardcore from these guys... Psychopoppers **Dios** have forced to alter their bandname in cooperation with a cease-and-desist order from metal God, **Ronnie James Dio**... In other Rev news, **Plot To Blow Up The Eiffel Tower**

ED REYES, GUITARIST OF TAKING BACK SUNDAY, WAS A FOUNDING MEMBER OF LONG ISLAND HARDCORE LEGENDS INSIDE, MIND OVER MATTER, AND THE MOVIELIFE.

has officially joined the label's roster... Bassist **George Rice** has parted ways with **High On Fire**. His replacement: Ex-Melvins bass player **Joe Preston**... Former **Norma Jean** frontman **Josh Scogin** has a new band called **The Chariot**... **Trustkill's Armsbendback** have broken up... **Time In Malta** frontman **Todd Gullion** has left the band to pursue a higher education... **Strike Anywhere** guitarist **Matt Sherwood** was recently named the nation's most "Completely Irresistible Face" in a competition hosted by pro-tennis hottie **Anna Kournikova**, but we knew

he was a piece all along... **Jello Biafra** and the **Dead Kennedys** have dropped all legal action against one another. Still no hope for a DK reunion... **John Maurer** has left **Social Distortion** after 20 years in the band. His temporary replacement is none other than **Rancid's** **Matt Freeman**... **Sparta** drummer **Tony Hajjar** recently injured his wrist and had to sit out much of the **Incubus/Sparta** tour. Sharing fill-in duties for the band was **Incubus'** drummer and bassist... The great **Agnostic Front** have left **Epitaph** and have moved on the mother

of all New York Hardcore labels, **Nuclear Blast**... **Law of Inertia** will release a **Smashing Pumpkins** tribute record. Confirmed bands at press time include **Hopesfall**. Look for this awesome release in the summer of 2005... **Springman Records** will release **Big D And The Kids' Table's** next record, *How It Goes*, this fall... **Strung Out's** next record, *Exile in Oblivion*, is sure to be awesome. Look for it on **Fat Wreck** this winter... **Jade Tree** has signed **The Loved Ones**, featuring ex-members of **The Curse** and **Kid Dynamite**. [Aaron "Left Home" Lefkove]



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THE RISE FAMILY TREE



THE RISE

Simply put, The Rise are the best band you may have overlooked. Their mix of fist-pumping hardcore combined with electronic techno rhythms have set them apart from the countless copycat acts that litter the hardcore landscape today. Their debut album for Ferret Music, *Signal To Noise*, was a jaw dropper, as is *Reclamation Process*, the CD given away with this issue in defiance of the standards dictated by the music industry powers. Their members continue to shine in the acts below.



WISE VERSA

Album: *Like A Glove* (I Surrender)

Alum: Kemble Walters (guitar/vocals)

Picture This: Balls-to-the-wall rock in the vein of The Darkness or Foo Fighters is what these guys are all about. Touring alongside Midtown and Armor For Sleep has garnered the band serious attention. Kemble proves he is more than just a great drummer.



JULIETTE & THE LICKS

Album: *Like A Lightning Bolt* (Fiddler)

Alum: Kemble Walters (guitar)

Picture This: Fronted by Juliette Lewis, the starlet made famous in *Natural Born Killers*, The Licks feature members of H2O as well as The Rise. Don't let their Hollywood pedigree fool you, they rock harder than Keanu Reeves' Dogstar ever did.



OCELOT MTHRFCKRS

Album: *Wait, Wait* (release date: 2005)

Alum: Cory Kilduff (guitar)

Picture This: An electronic project from The Rise's two principal knob-twisters, the group have re-mixed songs by the likes of Elliott Smith, Throwdown, and Snapcase in addition to their highly creative originals. Think Telefon Tel Aviv, Kid 606, and Atari Teenage Riot.



UNDEROATH

NO HALO FOR KILLERS

During an election year, it makes sense for politically driven punk acts like NOFX and Anti-Flag to utilize their spotlight for a president-bashing field day. Now more than ever, there is a glaring flaw to this plan: more than 90% of their audiences won't be able to vote until 2008. Tim McTague and the rest of Underoath have made this same observation, and instead of using their current, larger audiences to spread messages of rebellion and discontent, Tooth & Nail's revamped hardcore five-piece is encouraging kids at their shows to simply have fun.

"Every band says the exact same thing about stopping war, bringing back peace, drop Bush, vote Kerry, and it almost becomes a joke," McTague says. "Then they turn around and sell \$5,000 a day in merch and get rich off the system they tore apart. We just like to have fun, and we want kids to have fun and feel comfortable

and welcomed at our shows. It's like hardcore kids put up these walls, and we try to break down those walls."

After spending most of the summer on the Vans Warped Tour, McTague and his bandmates had the chance to practice what they preach. Being part of a large-scale tour forced Underoath to abandon their van transportation in favor of a fully loaded bus. On that bus was something that McTague said changed the way the band would live on tour forever: Xbox.

"The bus has two TVs and they both have Xbox," he says. "We were freaking out. We bought this linking cable so we could link the front lounge to the back lounge and play Halo tournaments." It wasn't long before Underoath stretched that linking cable to other tour busses, getting the likes of Story Of The Year and Mae involved in band vs. band showdowns. McTague says Underoath

has pummeled every band they've faced, but he's still waiting for a special challenge with New Found Glory. "I hear they're pretty sick," he says, "but they're New Found Glory. I don't know if they've heard of us, but the challenge is definitely open."

Upon learning of the band's recent video game addiction, Microsoft awarded Underoath an Xbox sponsorship that included free games and gear. McTague boasts that Underoath helped turn Warped Tour nights into a sea of glowing television sets. That sea, however, stops at the busses of the old-schoolers. "Fat Mike's got this ridiculous high-stakes poker game," McTague says. "We play poker in our bus all the time for like five bucks, but those guys are on a whole different level than we are. I could buy a car if I won every game of poker with them." [Matt Neatock]



NOT YOUR DADDY'S PUNK ROCK COLISEUM

Coliseum's first full length album for Level Plane. The record has more heart, attitude, and energy than any other punk rock release in recent memory.

Fans of Patterson's other work, including Black Cross and The National Acrobat, will find that Coliseum has a more straightforward approach to their music, drawing comparisons to Motörhead and early Black Flag. The riffs are simple, the beats are relentless, and the social commentary is not veiled in too much metaphor.

"I couldn't imagine getting on stage and playing without having some kind of comment to make about the world around [me]," says the Kentucky native. "It's also

about dealing with everyday life. Sometimes it's great and sometimes it's a fucking struggle." Whether you agree with the band's world outlook or not, they deserve credit for not limiting their political message to catch phrases like the ever popular "Fuck George Bush."

The best part about this band is where they're coming from, and it's not the mall. "I felt like I needed to get some things out of my system by playing some really heavy, angry punk," comments Patterson. "I couldn't just sit at home." If nothing else, this band is out to prove that there are still some pissed off people in middle-America. [Stan Horaczek]

<photos> Underoath: Frank Corva

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HOT TOPIC



THE SOVIETTES

From: Minneapolis, MN
Album: *LPII* (Adeline)

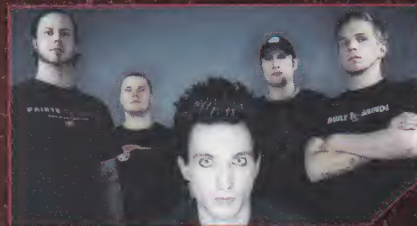
Picture This: The coldest state in the U.S. breeds some of the best underground rock around: brutal metalcore (Harvest, Disembodied), fabulous pop-punk (Cadillac Blindside, The Crush), and now the sugary sounds associated with Brooklyn bands like Yeah Yeah Yeahs and The Rapture. The Sovietettes set Minnesota on fire with sass and style.



ANADIVINE

From: Kingston, NY
Album: *Zoo* (The Militia Group)

Picture This: Formerly known as Jerk Magnet, this upstate New York quartet plays soaring, atmospheric rock that nods to punk, indie, and the ever-present emo sound of the moment. With previous releases on SideCho, the band has been building a steady following and is causing a commotion around the nation!



CALIBAN

From: Germany
Album: *The Opposite From Within* (Abacus)

Picture This: Hell Fest 2004. What seems like 400 bands laying down breakdowns so heavy the ground shakes like an earthquake. One band lays down the chugga-chugga so blistering the sound echos all the way to New York City. That band is called Caliban, and if you like Killswitch Engage or Poison The Well you will mess your shorts over this quintet.



ONLY CRIME

From: Texas, Colorado, California, Massachusetts, and more.
Album: *To The Nines* (Fat Wreck)

Picture This: Members of Bane, Good Riddance, Black Flag, All, The Descendents, Hagfish, and Gwar play music that sounds like *First Four Years*-era Black Flag with Milo from The Descendents on vocals. Makes sense 'cause Russ of Good Riddance is often compared with Milo, and Bill Stevenson played drums for Black Flag and The Descendents. So there.



MISERY SIGNALS

HIT THE BRICKS

Of all the struggles a band can go through while paving their way through the often fickle and harsh world of aggressive rock, Milwaukee, Wisconsin's Misery Signals were born from a catastrophe above all others. The members were gaining momentum in their previous bands 7 Angels 7 Plagues and Compromise. While the two bands were on tour together in Alabama, a drunk driver struck Compromise's van. Their guitarists, Jordan Wodehouse and Daniel Langlois, both died in the accident. After the breakup of 7 Angels 7 Plagues, the remaining members decided to form Misery Signals, an abrasive hardcore outfit hailing from both sides of the northern border.

In the short time since their inception, Misery Signals has recorded a blistering EP and a full length on Ferret Music entitled *Of Malice And The Magnum Heart*, a slow, grinding epic that is both calming and crushing.

The band throws hardcore and metal into the mix with more finesse than many of their contemporaries. "We seem to be well received by both," comments bassist Kyle Johnson. "I've been involved in hardcore for many years now, so I obviously feel more comfortable on a tour with other hardcore bands versus metal bands. But by doing crossover tours you tend to reach out to new kids who otherwise would have no idea what hardcore is."

As any fan of hardcore and metal knows, the line between the two has grown increasingly thin over the past few years. When asked how the evolving nature of aggressive rock has affected his band, Johnson replies matter of factly, "It gets harder to keep up with bands like Atreyu that bring metalcore to the mainstream. I think that Misery Signals is different. We don't try to be those bands, we write for ourselves and we focus on originality which is more important

than ever right now." Fortunately for him, Misery Signals' music is more exciting and original than many of the uninspiring acts on the scene today.

The band has already earned comparisons to the revered Shai Hulud who have been making slow, melodic hardcore for the better part of the past decade. Johnson remains nonplussed by comparisons, "It is flattering to be compared to Shai Hulud. We've gotten that a lot since the new CD came out. They are one of the better bands to come out of hardcore so we definitely take it as a compliment." Both share a penchant for screamed vocals over music that is both crushing and uplifting. Misery Signals' rich textures show a band well ahead of their peers and onto something even more potent. If happiness sometimes rises out of tragedy, then Misery Signals may well be the eye of the storm. [RS]

THE ALBUM LEAF

IN FULL BLOOM



"I don't really know what's going on with a lot of pop music," confesses Album Leaf progenitor Jimmy LaValle. He laughs when I tell him he is lucky, but this statement speaks volumes for his career. LaValle has left his mark all over the musical map, from his stint with grindcore stars The Locust to the sullen, melodic meanderings of The Black Heart Procession to the more jagged sounds of Tristeza. However, his muse seems most stirred when writing and performing as The Album Leaf.

LaValle's latest release and Sub Pop debut, *In A Safe Place*, is garnering acclaim from critics and fans alike. "It's been doing well, which is rad," he enthuses. "It's a completely different world, having people at your shows, people buying your record. It's just not what I am used to." This situation led to the concept behind the album which LaValle describes as "the overall look of everything of me now."

In A Safe Place comes

across as a dynamic, calm, and isolated album. Recorded in Iceland at the request of touring mates Sigur Rós, LaValle looked forward to the collaborative possibilities of working with his friends, but often times found himself alone with his own thoughts. "I initially went out there thinking I would write the songs, or half the songs, and have [Sigur Rós and Black Heart Procession] complete them so it would be more of a collaboration. It didn't end up working out that way though, they just sort of popped in and out," he recalls. "It's a bunch of people that are like-minded in terms of music and I think it did come together that way."

LaValle's time in Iceland resulted in a record that joins lush arrangements with delicate, quiet songs largely on the instrumental side. Touring the world behind *In A Safe Place*, LaValle is hopeful and at ease. "I'm not even working on new music," he contends, "but it will come when it's supposed to." [SB]

<photos> Misery Signals: Ross Siegel

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JADE TREE

YOU'RE ONLY PUNK ONCE

Interview with Darren Walters

Jade Tree has been around for 15 years, which is an eternity for an indie label. To what do you credit this good fortune? Being organized, legal, and legit from day one. That seems to be a major stumbling block for any business owner and since I am so anal, I made sure that Jade Tree did these things from the beginning and continued to do them every day thereafter. I also credit our distributor Mordam and Mordam's owner Ruth Schwartz, who saw something in Jade Tree way back in 1992 and have not only done an awesome job and provided help and guidance since that day, but also a steady check for the sales of our records every month without fail since Jade Tree and Mordam joined forces. And last but not least, all of the great bands that have shared the Jade Tree beliefs and visions!

At what point did you guys make Jade Tree your full time jobs? Did you have to make any concessions to do so?

1997. I had been laid off from an education software job and was finished with teaching. In addition, Tim [Owens] and I had a slew of better selling releases in the previous two years (e.g. Lifetime, Promise Ring) and knew we needed to give the label extra attention if it was to grow. I was also tired of working 18 hour days and then doing mail order in my bedroom, so this seemed like a good time for the label owners to be in the same state and combine forces and share the work load. Once Tim and I decided to make the jump, he moved to Delaware and we got a house together and went for it. **Your roots lie in straightedge hardcore. Do you guys still feel that you have any connection to the hardcore scene?**

Certainly. At 34 I'm not as up on things as a person half my age, but I do tour (mainly with Paint It Black) and I see kids at shows and how hardcore is 20 years after I got into it. I'm also still edge and consider hardcore the map that led me to the way I am as an adult. I can still be caught in the pit every now and again. I'm not afraid to get going for a 'core band that I truly enjoy.

Jade Tree has always proclaimed itself as a "punk oriented" label, even though you often do not release what is commonly thought of as punk music. How and why do you still feel a connection with punk?

Because it is more of an ideal than a look or a sound, at least personally. The entire way that Jade Tree is run is punk and in that way, no matter what the music sounds like, Jade Tree is very much a punk label.

You guys are especially spiteful towards Clear Channel Communications. Why is that? Has it been hard to do everything your bands require while maintaining an anti-big-music-industry stance?

I was brought to that topic after The First Unitarian Church in Philadelphia was shut down during an Explosion show. The promoter and others suspected that Clear Channel was behind it. This situation motivated me to get interested in media conglomeration. Once I found out more, and as the situation in Philly intensified, I started learning more and becoming more active and interested. Just a few months later our annual CMJ showcase in NYC was booked at what I later found out was a Clear Channel venue so I pulled the plug. That immediately threw the label and myself into the spotlight and I ended up doing a ton of interviews and opening my big mouth everywhere. So now I know a lot more and with even more recent events I despise not just Clear Channel, but most, if not all of the media consolidation happening in the US. This is a huge topic. It has been tough to [survive] in a much more business environment; especially as punk and indie music has become more mainstream. The involvement of bigger corporations, more money, shrinking indie venues, and greater constraints has been a big issue for Jade Tree. However, to me, it is much more important to fight this type of shit than fold and be like every other business in the world, record label or otherwise. I'm just not having it, even if it does make my life suck sometimes.

(www.jadetreecom)



THE VELVET TEEN

HEARTS OF DARKNESS

A year ago, The Velvet Teen were one of the indie rock's most promising bands. Five years of supporting tours with Cursive and Death Cab For Cutie had the band selling out headlining spots up and down the west coast. With the release of their critically-lauded debut, *Out of The Fierce Parade*, their brilliantly catchy pop songs were finding their way onto commercial radio and MTV. 2003 was only halfway through and the band was looking forward to a tour of Japan and returning home to record an anticipated follow-up EP.

Then began what singer/guitarist Judah Nagler describes as "the band's own personal *Apocalypse Now*." While in Japan, drummer Logan Whitehurst became chronically ill with a mysterious illness. Upon returning to the States, Nagler and his long-time girlfriend parted ways. What started as a quick session for an EP turned into a four month-long marathon. A small project based around "some simple piano ideas" spiraled into

epics with progressive, grandiose structures. The band went into the studio daily, manically adding layers of accompaniment of flutes, horns, sequenced synthesizers, and string quartets to what would come to be titled *Elysium*. "We were even hurriedly recording parts in the car on our laptop on the way to mastering," recounts bassist Josh Staples.

One thing you won't hear on *Elysium* is any three-minute pop songs or Nagler's catchy guitar. Instead, like Coppola's opus, the results of the band's torturous months are dark, ambitious, lush, grand, sweeping, and symphonic. Also like the film, the album reflects the backdrop of the trying personal circumstances under which it was produced. If *Elysium* is a place of ideal happiness, then the situations documented by the lyrics are anything but.

After finishing the record, a CAT scan revealed a brain tumor as the

source of Whitehurst's ongoing illness. After a successful surgery and some soul searching, the founding drummer decided to quietly end his term with The Velvet Teen to recover from chemotherapy. "It was an amicable split and everybody understands why he had to leave," recounts Staples. "He spent four straight months going in the recording studio every single day while being sick and nauseous and not knowing what it was."

In some ways the band will end this year much the same as the last, with a headlining tour of Japan and starting on their next full length album. Like many great epics, at the end of the story the characters return to where they started, having gone through endless trials and inextricably changed.

When asked what the next record is going to be like, Nagler says only one word: "Dancy." Maybe he's been watching Coppola's own follow-up: *One From The Heart*. [Matt Tomich]

MC LARS

POSTMODERN PUNK



"We call it post-punk laptop rap," quips Andrew Nielsen, better known as hip-hop/indie sensation MC Lars. Not long ago, the hybrid performer was studying abroad at Oxford University where he made friends in the local music scene by passing around burned copies of his dorm room recordings. The demos caused quite a stir amongst his friends' bands who requested he perform short sets before they played. "Eventually people started to recognize me," he says, which ultimately gave birth to MC Lars.

Lars signed to UK label Truck Records and released his first album *Radio Pet Fencing*. The album is a collection of songs recorded entirely in his dormitory at Stanford University where he continues his studies in 19th century American literature. "On the first CD, I did all the recording by myself," says Lars. However, on his latest release, *The Laptop EP*, Lars uncovered the possibilities of collaboration. "The ideas were filtered through more channels," he says in regards to band members Patrick "PJ"

McCombs and Damondrick "DJ" Jack. "They offered great ideas for how to program drums and fit harmonies over melodies."

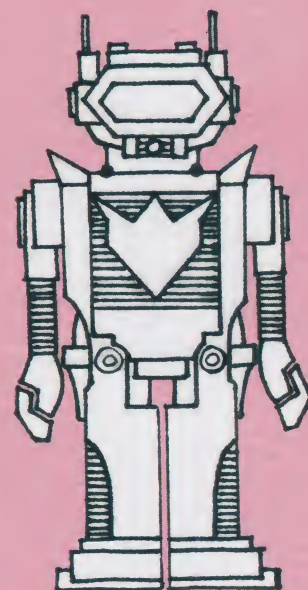
Citing influences that span from KRS-One to Green Day, Lars is undoubtedly an amalgam of pop culture commentary, hip-hop rhythm, and indie rock sampling. Lyrically, Lars stays true to what he knows. "I try to write about my everyday life," he says, "I try not to be someone else." This way of thinking works well for Lars who finds that college students, hipsters, and teenagers alike are all relating to what he has to say.

Regardless of his success, Lars has plans to attend graduate school and get his PhD. As for music, he remains inspired, with goals to make otherwise bland topics "interesting and cool," something that will definitely emerge in his teaching style. "If people don't appreciate something being different that doesn't mean they should denigrate it," he aptly states. Understand him or not, that's advice that everyone should follow. [Nadine Cheung]

<photos> The Velvet Teen: Frank Corva; MC LARS: Marla Aufmuth

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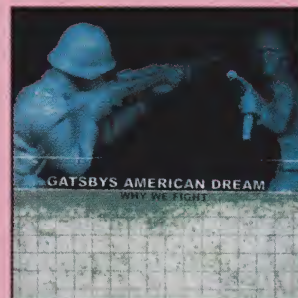
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LEGENDS

HELMET

Page Hamilton and Helmet laid the foundation for minimalist hardcore that blew away every nü-metal band under the sun.

How does the new Helmet compare to the old line-up?

I absolutely understand that people would have expectations because Helmet has a history. I said to friends and relatives, "If you're concerned about it, wait 'til you hear the album." People are worried how it's going to come off live. People should just come to the shows and judge for themselves. I mean, we will be prepared and rehearsed as Helmet always is and has been. I am very committed to playing live, much like the old version of Helmet. This time we have new songs and a new record, but the other songs we played a few hundred to a thousand times, we're going to be comfortable with them. Now we have the task of infusing excitement with it so that it doesn't sound tired. The challenge with new stuff is learning the new stuff and having it rock as hard as the old stuff and that's always going to be the case.

Now that you've ventured into the world of producing film scores, why go back to playing in Helmet?

I miss playing live in my own band. I've played with other bands and had fun, but there is something specific about Helmet that I was missing. It's sort of a hypnotic, physical vibe that comes out of the guitar. It's hard to describe, there's just nothing like it. I was really missing it.

Besides *Catwoman* what other movies are you working on?

The last two movies were *Collateral* and *Catwoman*. I don't do that many and when the calls come in I do what I can. I don't have anything on the horizon but I try to do anything with [acclaimed film composer] Elliot Goldenthal because it's a lot of fun and I always learn a lot working with him.

When Helmet was coming up, you guys were central to what was going on in the New York City aggressive rock scene. Is there something to be said about how intense shows in NYC were in the late '80's and early '90's?

I accredit everything to CBGB. I walked into CBGB one day with a demo cassette, an eight-track recording that we did at Don Fury's, and said, "Hi, I have this band, we are called Helmet and we want to play." Louise [Parnassa, CBGB's booker] said "It would be a lot faster if you guys just do an audition night," which are on Sundays. We did, and then we played there once a month with bands like Unsane and Cop Shoot Cop. We played at The Pyramid a couple of times and then we did a little two-week tour of the northeast. The beauty of the northeast is that you can hop in van and go on the road and play five to 20 shows without covering that many miles. It's a great thing for a band and it was a great thing for Helmet. We went from being an interesting band to being a great band in the course of a month of doing shows and making it work. One thing about the northeast and New York City is that I don't know of a place that has as many opportunities. Between CBGB and The Pyramid, every night of the week someone was playing somewhere. Bands like Unsane, Surgery, Sonic Youth; those were



the big bands while we were just doing our thing. We would just hang out together.

Helmet laid the blueprint for the nü wave metal that came out in the past 12 years. Do you have any resentment or sense of accomplishment towards that?

We seem to have influenced quite a bit of bands. There's no resentment, I just do what I do and try to progress as a writer, singer, and player. One guy at the label said, "40 million records were sold because of what you started and we would like to see that you get credit." Am I proud? It's cool when someone tells me that I have a big influence on him or her, but I don't sit around thinking I'm the shit and trying to suck my own dick or anything. I can just be gracious and say I really appreciate it. Some of the shit that has been said about me by ex-bandmates used to hurt me, but after a while you realize that it's out of some kind of bitterness. Sometimes I'm a dick but I am usually a nice guy, I think. It's just rock music. For me to sit down and worry about my legacy or how people are going to perceive me would completely destroy my ability to make music and be truthful about what I'm doing. Jimmy Iovine said to me a long time ago that "the blank page can be a real bitch," and I know it as well as anyone.

During your tenure playing with David Bowie did he teach you any tricks? Do you have any memorable experiences?

Yeah, he's amazing. He's one of our greatest living songwriters, singers, and performers. I got to sit 12 feet in front of him everyday in rehearsal and play his songs and hear his voice coming through my monitors. That was incredibly powerful. Also, there were times that he would discuss songwriting or things that influenced him. To be in the presence with someone who is so prolific and such a forward thinking, creative mind, if it does not rub off on you, I feel sorry for you. That opportunity to play with him was great but also a challenge.

Do you have any expectations that you have to live up to considering the new line up? Are you confident?

Absolutely confident. It's a really good band. I wouldn't go out and put a half assed band together. People are telling me that it's the best album I ever made and that's how I feel about it. With the new band hitting the road for the first time I don't expect it to be flawless, but I expect it to be a task. I don't think that was ever a Helmet trademark. Part of playing live is flying by the seat of your pants. It would be boring otherwise. From my perception I'm just going to get up and do what I do. Honestly I hope people dig it. [The Goon]

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STEVEN SEAGAL: FROM COOL LOOKS TO HOT LICKS

The Site: http://www.nonsoloblues.com/steven_uk.html

Six-hour spray tan sessions and the blues usually do not go hand-in-hand, but this aging action hero recently turned in his nunchucks for a guitar. Seagal leaves behind catch phrases like, "You a tough guy; who's a tough guy," and "I'll take him to the bank...the blood bank" for his first full length *Songs From the Crystal Cave*. Seagal released the album solely in France, where it quickly rose atop the Club Slow Charts, whatever that is. He even convinced Stevie Wonder to collaborate on "My God." Whatever its fate in the U.S., *Crystal Cave* will surely earn a place on Steven's mantle along with the cue ball that broke Tough Guy #9's nose in "Out For Justice." [Adam Lindenbaum]

SAMMY HAGAR: FRIEND OF SHRIMP

The Site: <http://www.cabowabo.com>

The "Red Rocker" lit up the music world for three decades, but now he's traded in his yellow jumpsuit for a chef's hat and blender. Cabo Wabo is the name of Sammy's nightclub and his signature brand of Tequila. The website has an elaborate history of the club where the humble Hagar says "the Cantina has long been one of the topmost places to party in Mexico, and the world." Visitors to the Cantina can look forward to "Sammy Hagar's Cabo Wabo Drunken Shrimp" where "even the shrimp have a good time when hanging out with Sammy!" Of course, no meal would be complete without a tall glass of Cabo Wabo Tequila and Southern Comfort, or as it's known at the Cantina, a "Can't Drive 55." If you're lucky you can down the drink while listening to the song. And you thought that could only happen in a club owned by Jimmy Buffet. [Tim Holden]

MICKEY ROURKE: MILLION DOLLAR SMILE

The Site: <http://www.thebadboymickeyrourkewebsite.com>

Ever since Jim Brown put on a pair of combat boots in *The Dirty Dozen*, audiences have become used to seeing sports stars on screen. Even Brian Bosworth did a decent job in the oft-maligned "Stone Cold." It's quite rare, however, that an actor would trade in the red carpet for the weight room. And it's downright bizarre for an actor to dare to lace up boxing gloves, chomp a mouthpiece and risk losing his million dollar looks. Leave it to Mickey Rourke to do just that. Soon after filming *Harley Davidson and the Marlboro Man* in 1991, Mickey figured it was time to stop acting and start a new career. After a perfect record of 11-0 Mickey managed to sustain two concussions, four nose operations, and a shattered cheekbone. By apparently not bothering to block any punches, Rourke averaged a serious injury every 1.4 fights. Tough break, Mickey. [Tim Holden]

BEN JONES: GREASE MONKEY TO SLIPPERY POLITICIAN

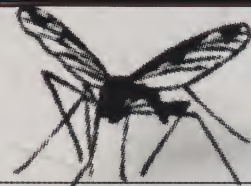
The Site: <http://www.cootersplace.com>

Although former actors Reagan and Schwartzenegger attained elected positions of greater stature, no second career was more unlikely than former Democratic Congressman Ben Jones. Jones didn't have the public relations luxury of pumping iron or riding off into the sunset. Prior to serving two terms for Georgia, he attained fame in television series *The Dukes of Hazzard* as Cooter, the country-fried always-dirty sidekick of Bo and Luke Duke. I know when I'm behind the voting curtain, I take comfort knowing my representative's pickup won't quit on the way to signing that abortion bill. We live in a Democracy, where one vote can make all the difference. You might as well have one of the good ol' boys on your side. [Adam Lindenbaum]



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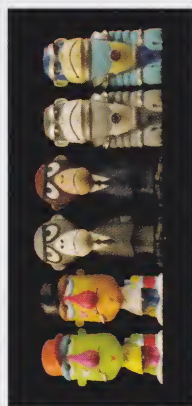
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TRUTH® T-SHIRT

Some people say a T-shirt is nothing more than a walking billboard. With this new design from Battlezone creator typeStereO (and two others by hip hop icon Mr. Cartoon and graphic artist Michael Leon of Commonwealth Stacks) the people at truth have created some slick new moving billboards, each designed to help spread the truth message a little further. Whatever you say, you'll look damn fine doing it.

MONKEY VS. ROBOT

Vinyl toys are where disposable income goes to die. The adult toy market seems to grow by leaps and bounds every few months with everyone and their mother vying to get a piece of the action. Monkey vs. Robot are Less Than Jake's foray into the vinyl toy market. With their comic book style, the line stacks up against many of their Japanese competitors, making them an object of desire not just for fans of the band.

GRAVIS

Typically associated with golf courses, sweater vests and socks, Gravis is bringing a new look to the sneaker world, argyle patterned kicks. With a limited release of the Comet Royale and Comet Royale Low for the holiday season, make sure and get 'em while the gettin's good.

NINTENDO DS

When the Gameboy SP came out in 2003, the updated flip out design brought portable gaming beyond the confines of grade school playgrounds. Once you flipped the SP open though, it was nothing more exciting than a standard Gameboy Advance. That's all going to change with the soon to be released Nintendo DS. N64 processing capabilities, dual screens, voice recognition, wireless capabilities, and most important of all, a built in headphone jack, something sorely lacking with the SP.

ESP DV8 SE+ LTD DV8-R SE

ESP seems to specialize in crafting signature guitars for the thrash metal gods. Slayer and Anthrax have them. So does Metallica. Megadeth's Dave Mustaine and ESP have long been partners in bringing the finest in pointy V shaped things to a Guitar Center near you and the DV8 is the latest in this line. With a neck-thru-body construction, two Seymour Duncan humbucking pickups, and all the sharp corners and mechanical doodads you'd expect from ESP the DV8 is no weekend axe. However, in true Mustaine fashion, Kirk Hammett—his Metallica replacement—still one-ups him with his own long-running line of shred-ready guitars, also available from ESP.

OF STYLE

MINI BIKES

Mini bikes, pocket bikes, minipocket bikes. Call them what you will, but fitted with engines just a shade under the 50cc limit, these bikes are street legal in most states without a motorcycle license.

Ninja GT

Top Speed: 30 mph

Range: 45 miles

Price: \$499.95

www.minipocketbikes.com

Superbike thrills without the superbike spills. Modeled after real racing motorcycles, this is one of the largest mini bikes on the market (irony anyone?) meaning it will handle and feel more like a real bike. Plus, you don't have to ride in that awkward hands-in-crotch position required by smaller bikes.

Razor Pocket Rocket

Top Speed: 15 mph

Range: 45 minutes of electric powered fun

Price: \$199.99

www.razor.com

Typically associated with the scooter every kid in America under the age of 12 seems to own. Now you can associate Razor with this sweet little electric bike that everyone's going to want to own.

Chopper III

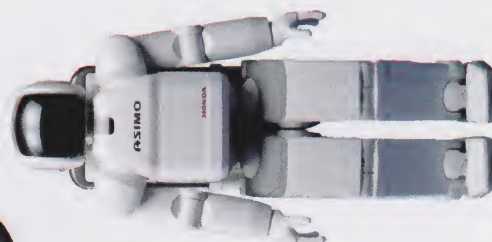
Top Speed: 30 mph

Range: 25 miles

Price: \$599.95

www.minipocketbikes.com

From Easy Rider to Pulp Fiction to Terminator 2, choppers are just plain cool, always have been, always will be, even in miniature form.

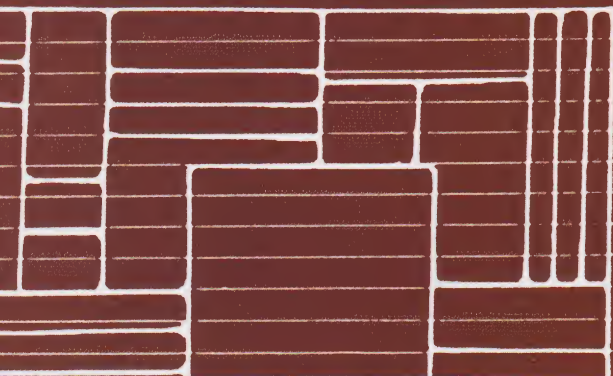


BIG IN JAPAN: ROBOTS

Camera phones, video game systems, digital fabric, you name it, anything high tech is almost always going to debut in Japan. Next in line? Humanoid Robots. Major companies like Sony and Honda along with futuristic sounding government funded agencies like the Computational Neuroscience Laboratories are working on various projects hoping to create autonomous robots with the intelligence of a small child. While this is nothing new, what is, is that the Japanese government has granted permission to begin testing some of these robots in urban environments. The cities of Fukuoka and Kitakyushu now have what are called "Robot Tokku," deregulated zones where the dreams of science fiction writers are finally coming true.

FAT *mike*

a perfect gentleman



Despite being one of the most influential people in contemporary punk culture, "Fat Mike" Burkett is a skeptic when it comes to common definitions of success. Through music he's become one of the underground's most recognized figures, but more than a guy in a band or a record label executive, Fat Mike is a social entrepreneur.

His grounded approach has steadily guided both his band, satire-punk kings NOFX, and record label, San Francisco's Fat Wreck Chords, to respected cornerstone positions of the punk community. His Punkvoter and Rock Against Bush movements have furthered his status as a significant player in culture the industry. Still, there's little "ambition" found in the way he presents himself. His elevator speech, so to speak, is very clear. He is not interested in the domination of markets, ideology, or anything else. Implicitly, Fat Mike wants you to learn by example, not by dogmatism.

As the music industry struggles to keep pace with changes in technology and culture, Fat Wreck Chords may best exemplify Fat Mike's accidental leadership-by-example. With one outdated industrial mechanism after another breaking down, he sees substance as the only thing that can keep the structure from falling apart.

"I think the music industry is doomed. It's going downhill, and will continue to go downhill," he says. "For so long, bands have been making records that have one or two hit songs, and that has to stop. Bands have to get signed, not because of their image, but because of how great their record is. With the internet and shit, [the music industry is] just basically doomed. The great bands will have careers," he suspects, "but the mediocre bands are the ones who are going to lose. You know, like on the Warped Tour, you see what bands are going to stick around. You see what bands are still relevant, and have the biggest fans, and do the best. It's not the bands who have two good songs."

For many record labels, how good or bad a record is simply does not matter. Instead, the bottom line is almost always a numbers game. In other words, how many copies the label thinks it can sell determines all other actions. To most business managers, lawyers, and accountants, quality songwriting has nothing to do with the music industry. If all it takes is two songs to sell a record then from a business point of view what's the point of making fantastic, cohesive records that rock from start to finish? The answer: there is no point. Fat Mike is, in essence, asking how healthy that industry could be when it's overrun with inferior products.

"Our goal is not to get bigger or to be the biggest or the best," Fat Mike says. "We want to make bands happy and we like to put out our products. We feel that most of our stuff is socially relevant, and everyone makes a good living here—especially me. I don't need to make more and I don't need to make gold records and hit records. I want to put out quality records and I want my company to be around for a long time. But bigger and bigger?" he questions. "Not interested in that. It's a parallel of how I've always had NOFX. We never had the goal of becoming bigger [and] we haven't, but we've had a steady career for a fuckload of a long time."

For Fat Mike, it seems to largely be about creative mal-adjustment. In other words, he survives in a hostile environment on his terms without compromise. The result is ownership of a record label that looks and acts differently than many of its peers. "I think we run a paradigm of how capitalism should be run," says Mike. "We profit share, everyone's got insurance, and we take care of our bands. Nobody's being exploited. We try to get most of our stuff made in the U.S. Everything does get made in the U.S. except that sometimes CD artwork gets made in Canada. But Canada's fine because it's not fucking slave labor over there anyway." Fat Wreck uses a similar approach when it comes to record contracts with their bands. Frequently, they don't use them—and when a contract *is* used, it's almost exclusively a one-record deal.

"I'll tell you what else is unique about Fat Wreck Chords," he continues, "We try to keep our bands on our label when every other independent record label I can think of tries to get their bands signed to a major. We don't like our bands to leave, we never have. The only reason a couple bands left is because we only do one-record deals and they wanted to start selling gold and platinum records, and that's not really possible on this label, or it's very unlikely. We don't have the connections at MTV and commercial radio that other labels may have."

Unlike his peers in both the indie and major label worlds Fat Mike is banking that quality will win out over quantity. "There are just so many mediocre bands," says Fat Mike. "It's unbelievable." Labels might be able to sell millions of copies of bafflingly awful records, but it can't stay that way forever. As technology and popular culture evolve it's likely that the cream and the crap will be separated like never before. ■

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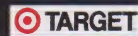
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THE COUP

BOOTS' CAMP

Boots Riley's first public appearance was at Kinderworld Gymnastics. Considering the reputation of Riley's Bay Area voice-of-the-people group, The Coup, this is a peculiar factoid. Tumbling around on blue mats doesn't seem to be the first thing that comes to mind when Riley's resume boasts accomplishments like the Black August tour in South Africa with Dead Prez, The 2004 Taco Bell Truth Tour/Farm Worker Freedom March, and teaching a class on the social issues of hip-hop at the School for Social Justice And Community Development in Oakland. Perhaps Kinderworld led to a different sort of gymnastics, one that doesn't necessarily stretch your muscles and tendons as much as jogs your mind and somersaults your ass into political activism.

On this particular morning The Coup's frontman is deep in a political debate before he has even wiped the dust from his eyes. For this Chicago-born MC it's "kill the system" for breakfast and "uplift the people" for dinner. He shares his views feverishly on both the concert stage and the academic world. "The way I relate to political ideas has to do with some of my early ideas of what organizing was." Boots' tenets are potent and brash. He challenges the scrutiny of *Fahrenheit 9/11* director Michael Moore. "[Moore] let the Democrats off the hook, making them negligent as opposed to complicit. The things that Kerry got medals for were actually things he should have been a war criminal for."

To Boots, it seems the right to elect officials who are sympathetic to their issues is lost in smoke screens propelled by slogans like "Anybody But Bush." He strongly believes that people should be more active in forcing their elected officials to adhere to their chosen agendas. "The politicians are basically the puppets. I feel like a movement can make a politician do anything. It can help to bring people to get involved, but I don't think the music can do anything by itself."

The combination of vigorous political action coupled with severe lyrical ability and musicality led to the formation of The Coup in the early '90's. Backed by DJ Pam The Funkstress and a live band utilizing everything from violins to harmonicas, The Coup spread a thick deposit of Oakland funk on their listeners. Songs like "20,000 Gun Salute," "Kill My Landlord," and "Five Million Ways To Kill A CEO" drove listeners to political awareness at the very least. "Ride The Fence" for which blackmustache.com animated a video complete with a red, white, and blue striped serpent devouring the globe, has been the talk of the underground hip-hop community for over a year now. "The music we make destroys the system," adds Riley. Therein lies the core of The Coup's struggle.

If you disagree with Boots' views, don't try and give his cell phone a ring. You will only be met with the message stating he is hard at work recording a new album and will not be answering nor returning phone calls until it's finished. The forthcoming record, to be released by Epitaph, will be The Coup's fifth effort. Boots dates himself by comparing himself to Prince: "Whereas *Party Music* is more like *Purple Rain*, this album is more like *Dirty Mind*." If you are thinking about hopping online to download the tracks, have no fear, the group won't pull a Lars Ulrich and come knocking on your door looking for lost royalties. "I think [piracy] is a good thing," he firmly offers. "As far as artists losing money from their recording revenues, they lose much more from the labels. What it does is it takes away from the music industry's machine. People will hear records on the same level that have a \$10,000 promotional budget as someone who has a \$2,000 promotional budget and they can choose from those."

The Coup has been on both sides of the fence, working with indie and major labels alike. Given their political positions it's no wonder both ruling classes of the music industry leave a bitter taste in their mouths.

"The weakness would be tied to this system where the music that sells the most goes through all these filters that have nothing to do with music," the rapper offers. "Musically, the development is really stunted." Nonetheless, The Coup does what they love most. "Life is about taking the things you like to do and figuring out that intersection between the thing you enjoy doing and the things you want to happen." If raising awareness about the world around them while creating music they love is what they want to happen, then they are undoubtedly on the right track.

If you think the man that takes on the mayor of Oakland and prints photographs of the World Trade Center exploding on his CD covers has nothing to fear, reflect once more. "What scares me is people being fooled into thinking it's [only] about who they elect [and that] will make things happen. I think unity and struggle are our most powerful tools." Look out America, you just might turn on CNN one night and find The Coup is taking over. ■



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The Hives

Ego Trippin

It's been two years since The Hives first landed on our shores as the most outspoken ambassadors of the Scandinavian rock and roll takeover. Back then it was easy to get signed to a major label, when frivolous details like experience and talent mattered little as long as you had a "The" before your name, a skinny tie, and a chic mop-top. With their eye-catching black and white suits, The Hives definitely had all the superficial requirements, but that was the least of their strengths. Three full length albums and close to a decade of practice helped these Swedes hone their particular brand of garage-punk down to an art form. Two years and what seemed like a million live shows after its initial release, *Veni Vidi Vicious* became a certified mainstream success. Understandably, the last year and a half has been quiet in The Hives' camp. Far from sitting around counting their millions, the band spent the time crafting their highly anticipated follow up, *Tyrannosaurus Hives*. With screamo eclipsing the rock revival as the public's genre *du jour*, do The Hives have staying power in the most fickle industry around?

"I think for any genre of music, 90% of it is going to be bad and then 10% of it is better," guitarist Nicholas Arson freely admits. "Of course, there's a bunch of good rock and roll you can find anywhere, but it *is* pretty hard to find it. It's kind of like when some of those bands got popular that were good bands and it became this thing in the media. It wasn't the case that there were more good bands four years ago than there was four years before that." In short, The Hives are real deal rockers, not a bunch of Johnny-come-latelies.

"It's like second-generation punk, where every band is the same. When those bands become popular there is always a concern within both the punk scene and the garage rock scene that it will become watered down," Arson offers. "In this style of music, there were always a lot of bad bands but it's just now that they're popular it's more annoying. A lot of the wrong bands got popular, but that's the way it is."

Their trademark cockiness may turn some off, but isn't that what rock and roll was

built on? The self-assured members of The Clash could often times be heard boasting they were "the only band that mattered," so it's only fitting that The Hives—rock's great white hope into the 21st century—carry on that tradition. Front man Howlin' Pelle Almqvist's proud, cock-sure onstage antics are mirrored in his wild-eyed enthusiasm when discussing anything from record collecting to his band. "It's a lot better for the human race if we're on the radio than not. As long as we get to be there it's fine, 'cause it's good music." They didn't get the chance to open for the Rolling Stones—self-professed ego-maniacs themselves—because of their modesty.

Taking another cue from The Stones, the band is not ashamed of their influences—which they proudly wear on their fine pressed sleeves—yet they in no way come off as a tribute act. The ability to evolve with each consecutive album is bolstered by their impeccable musical taste; what other band played on the radio can list The Saints, Adicts, and Bad Brains among their covers repertoire? They have always been a simple punk rock band ever since they started playing as teenagers, yet they never succumbed to the trappings of a typical small-minded punk scene—their influences were always smarter and more diverse than their peers. Claiming inspiration from such unlikely sources as Devo, Kraftwerk, and much of the early Motown roster, the band boasts a tighter, more eclectic sound because of it.

Any Hives song is a bundle of pure punk rock energy and a much-needed breath of fresh air among the various Strokes, Vines, Hoobastanks, and Maroon 5's cluttering popular radio. But how do The Hives feel about trend-hoppers buying their records? "I think it's cool if people like good rock music as opposed to liking something bad, even if they are sort of doing it because it's the cool thing to do," Arson continues. "It doesn't offend me as much as it used to. I just figure at least that's better than liking disco!" The Hives don't care if you're cool or not, so long as you listen to their music. What The Hives do care about is making music that they love and nothing is more punk than that. ■

ME FIRST AND THE GIMME GIMMES



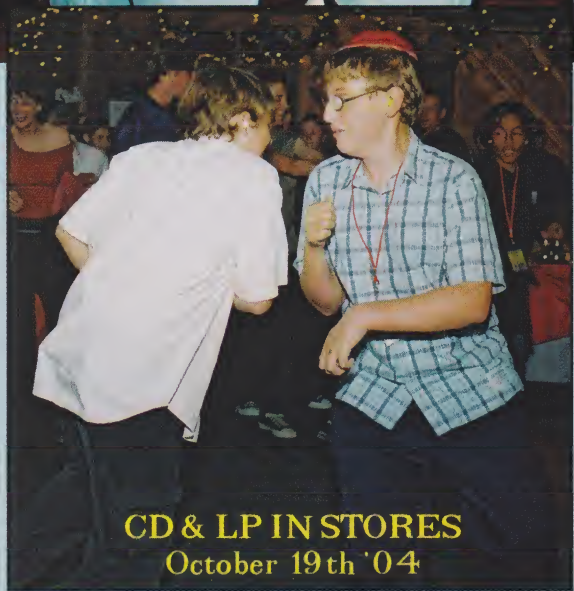
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NEUROSIS

A SUN THAT NEVER SETS

Approaching their 20th year, Neurosis has remained an intensely creative and powerful musical force since they first thundered their way into the pantheon of truly devastating heavy rock and roll. The band originated in the thriving East Bay Scene, aligning itself with the vanguard of the first wave of the burgeoning hardcore movement of the early 1980's. Neurosis continued to grow, sharing stages with everyone from punk-pop kings Green Day and Screeching Weasel to present day crushers like Isis and Shellac. Throughout their career, the band has garnered recognition for not only their devastating live show but also their uncompromising ethical outlook on both life and music. Like tidal wave or an acid trip, this band catches listeners unaware and for those that get it they never let go.

"It is our commitment to the music," says singer/guitarist Steve Von Till when asked how Neurosis has flourished creatively for so long. "For us, this music is a very special part of our lives and it must remain vital." Since their inception nearly 20 years ago, Neurosis has accomplished much considering they never achieved popular acclaim. The band has issued so many releases—including multiple live CDs, collaborations—on so many well-respected record labels, that comparisons to art-metal acts like The Melvins are all too obvious. Yet, they have always remained true to their original intent and spirit. "Our commitment has always been to be original and emotional, but we don't have to 'try,'" Von Till elaborates. "It is simply the only thing we know how to do."

When a band has been making music for almost 20 years it is inevitable that they would bear witness to several different musical trends. Some bands fall victim to trends, making compromised records that reflect the tastes of the day. Neurosis, however, have never oriented themselves towards a specific era, their music defies classification. It can be said that the only way to categorize their music is to compare it to the many bands who have been influenced by them. "It is pointless to worry about what other people are doing. They are the ones who have to live with what they do. If someone is simply riding a wave or trend, then they must not get a very deep sense of satisfaction in what they are doing," Von Till says.

Having just released a new full length, *The Eye of Every Storm*, Neurosis fans everywhere are wondering if the reclusive band will once again tour in support of the record. Von Till explains the band's future plans: "We will not be doing a

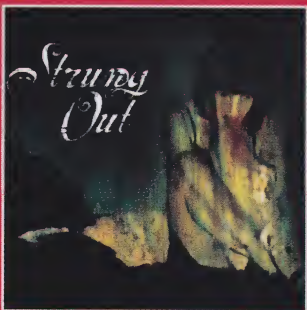
traditional tour where we get in the van and play every city in America. With this album we will be doing occasional, special, rare performances in a few cities.

"We have designed a really unique two and a half hour set featuring several songs from the new album, a couple from *A Sun That Never Sets*, plus a couple older ones." Neurosis' feeling is that the live show should be a different experience than the music on record. The band hopes to achieve an unrelenting spectacle live, complete with light shows that have been mimicked by everyone from Dillinger Escape Plan to Isis. Their live show is so powerful, that other bands often times list the simple act of touring with Neurosis as an influence to their sound.

"Our music is very demanding of the listener. For those who invest themselves in it, there is a reward. For those who don't, we simply go misunderstood." This explanation goes a long way to clarify both the band's attitude toward their music as well as the cult-like following that their approach has created. It is simple for bands lose perspective and start producing music for others rather than themselves. With Neurosis, it has always been different, like the band is creating something that is larger than themselves, but at the same time only for themselves. "We don't worry about what anyone else thinks about the music. It is completely self-centered. We make it for us, because we feel driven to. We have no choice. It is a primal, elemental spirit expressed through sound. This is something that some people will always seek out and find compelling."

One wonders, and can only speculate, how long a band like this will continue on their musical journey. For the curious, Von Till states simply, "We become more dedicated all the time. I think the older we get, the more we appreciate how lucky we are to have this outlet and this opportunity. It seems at this point that it will be a lifetime of inspiration." Interesting considering Von Till earns his keep as a math teacher rather than a musician. Unlike many more popular, less creative bands one wonders if Neurosis ever fully sustained themselves with their music, or if they even wanted to. Regardless, bands like Neurosis keep the spirit of independent music alive and vital. Those looking to be satisfied by art on a surface level will need to go elsewhere, but for the interested if you keep listening they will keep playing, although they'll probably play nonetheless. ■





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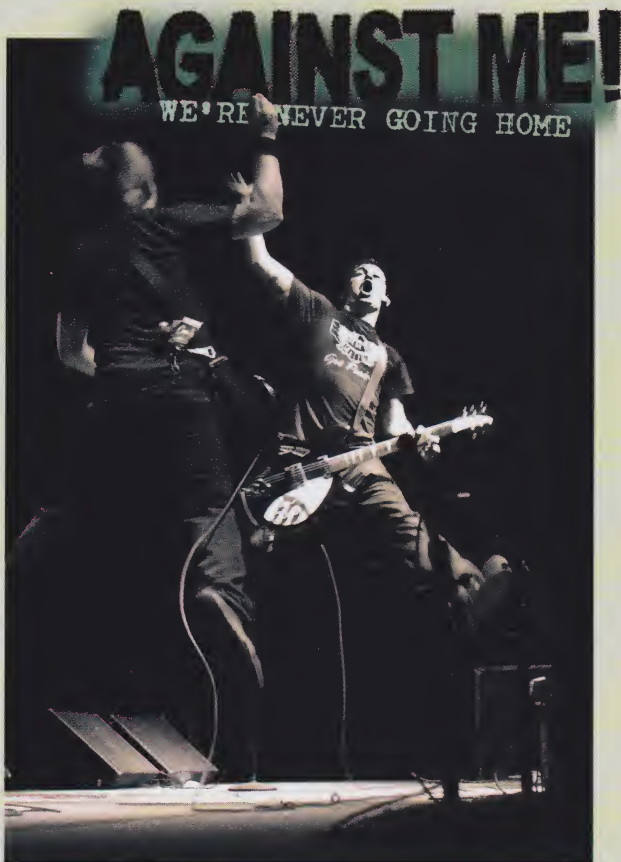
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STEVE ALBINI

the problem with music...revisited

10 years ago, Chicago-based recording engineer Steve Albini wrote an enlightening article for *Maximumrockroll's* one 133rd issue entitled "The Problem With Music." In the piece, the staunchly indie-minded Albini exposed the inner workings of a major label recording contract. He detailed how bands are approached, the legal proceedings that occur, and how artist revenue is distributed.

Having dealt with his share of major label acts—most famously Nirvana's *In Utero* sessions—Albini's article is still found to be enlightening by today's standards and is still available at www.negativland.com/albini.html. Today, Albini operates the Electrical Audio studio and continues to engineer (not produce) independent bands on a regular basis, most recently F-Minus and Flogging Molly.

How have things changed in the past 14 years, since your article has been published?

The specifics of everything have changed. Like now, the bands that are being approached by big record labels are no longer bands that are part of the underground or were part of the independent music scene. It's much more likely for bands to form with the intention of being part of the mainstream music business and then going through back channels with lawyers, managers, agents, and people like that [to make] connections for them. In a way, it's sort of reverted back to normal where the mainstream music business doesn't really mess with the independent music scene. In the independent music scene, there are still a few people who are trying to use it as a stepping-stone into the mainstream, but by and large, the bands and the people who have established themselves in the independent world have maintained that presence as a sort of a long-term commitment.

There has been a distinct rise in popularity for indie labels since you wrote your article. Consider what Epitaph, Vagrant, and Victory Records have done in the past few years. Do you see bands maintaining their ties to these indie labels due to their success?

You've named probably the biggest genre-specific labels in the United States. You're talking specifically about teenybopper punk rock and specifically about those labels—that's a very small part of the independent music scene. There are probably, I'm guessing, 150 viable independent labels in America that don't have anything to do with that scene—the cutesy-poo punk rock scene. Those labels are successful but they are successful in an idiom. Their core clientele expects them to

put out punk rock records and when they get away from that, they start to lose listeners. So, being successful as part of an idiom means you're satisfying the specific tastes of that idiom. It doesn't mean that your record label is fundamentally sound. It doesn't mean your business practices are fundamentally sound. Those specific labels that you're talking about, they were part of a trend that has that bouncy, jump-around music on MTV. They weren't part of the larger, political movement away from major labels. They were swept up in the "cuteifying" of punk rock.

How often do you turn down projects from major labels, if at all?

I don't get asked to do them anymore. I don't even have the luxury of saying no. It's been a few years since anybody has even called me about wanting to do a mainstream record.

You've done bands like Chevelle. Obviously, they've become a successful band. How specific are you in assuring that you work with a band that you're really into?

I'm not that selective. Specifically, when I recorded Chevelle's record, they were three brothers who had never put out a record before and were on a small, independent Christian-specific rock label, so doing that record was the same as doing any other record. I have to admit, I'm not terribly selective when it comes to whose records I work on. Anybody that calls, I'll have to give them credit for knowing why they called me.

You've always taken the engineer role on your recordings. How come you never actually sought to produce records?

I think when I first started doing things for other people, I did do more of what we'd call producing and I realized what a terrible mistake it was. For me to get involved in the

creative aspects of the record doesn't elevate the record. I know that well enough to not do it anymore! It is hard enough just getting the sound recorded without fucking it up. I don't want to think about "How many verses does this song have?" or "Should we have a glockenspiel?" and shit like that. That is none of my business.

Do you feel that bands are generally pretty good at making decisions musically?

Well, who else? If you think about it, let's say you've got a band, what makes it yours except that you make the decisions about it?

A lot of major labels don't believe that.

I'm not making records for those people. Even when I have made records for people who were on major labels, I only ever answered to the band. I never had to do anything over because of a record label person. I can't even imagine how I'd react if it were ever imposed on me. I don't even want to think about it.

Outside of the generalized gripe of "my contract sucks, I got screwed," what else have you heard from bands that you've recorded?

A lot of bands assume that if they get a contract that looks good to them that they are protected in some way. But they're only protected to the extent that they'll put their entire lives on hold and take somebody to court. You cannot force someone to pay you the money he owes you. You cannot force someone to behave honorably. Having a contractual relationship with someone you do business with defines the things that you will be arguing about. All the contract does is establish the parameters for the argument. It doesn't mean that anything written in the contract is actually going to happen. ■

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RISE AGAINST

are sick of it all

Take the handful of modern punk bands who have truly gone big with their music and you can see what parts of punk history they reflect while carving out their own identities. AFI is inspired by The Misfits, Green Day recalls The Clash, and Thursday's music frequently nods at Joy Division. When Chicago's Rise Against cites Minor Threat and the Bad Brains in their bio it's more than just par for the course, it's a declaration.

Rise Against is helping carry the mantle of positive hardcore to the masses. Having established a passionate fan base with two full lengths on Fat Wreck Chords, the band's recent move to Geffen seems largely unimportant to vocalist Tim McIlrath. He and his band look at the popular punk culture and are discouraged by what they have termed as "the off-dreary and disenchanting aura that engulfs most punk bands." For Rise Against the sheer utilitarian benefit of taking their music and message to the mainstream outweighs any potential pitfalls.

Still, there are dangers in using a corporate mouthpiece to communicate messages of social responsibility. Does the success of punk, hardcore, and emo in the mass market threaten the integrity of independent culture itself? In the midst of a cultural crossover, Rise Against is determined to rise above.

Do you think independent record labels have changed because punk rock has become a more available, more viable product?

I think that they have changed. Labels like Victory and Fat Wreck and Epitaph—because punk rock has become so huge in the last few years—those labels have become powerhouses of the indie scene. These labels are selling records by bands that are selling as many, if not more, albums than a lot of major label artists at this point. So that's definitely changed what they've had to do, as far as working with a bigger label. There's more to do all of a sudden, but I haven't really noticed anything, any sort of practices.

Do you think that the culture of the independent community has changed in the past few years?

It's definitely created a lot of impostor labels and impostor bands. There's an entire impostor punk scene being created out there. I think that's probably the first time this has happened in the history of punk rock and those people will be weeded out. People who really love what they do and who represent bands that they love and the bands that are out there [who are] being sincere are the ones that are going to make it—the ones that are going to rise to the surface and let the rest of 'em just kinda sink.

Going on the assumption that things ultimately work themselves out, do you still see things that you would like reformed—the way things are done, the way bands are treated, or the way that they have to do business in order to make a living?

You hear the good stories and you hear the bad stories and it doesn't matter, indie or major. Sometimes you hear a story about a band being sent back to write a single or a band delivering a record and the label not being happy about it. But I mean, that happens in the indie world and that happens in the major world, so it's sort of hard to say.

Are you first activists or musicians? Is your agenda laid on top of the fact that you are a band or is it the root of why you are a band in the first place?

I wouldn't go so far to say that it is the root. I barely consider myself a musician, you know what I mean? When I think of musicians I think of people playing in orchestras or people who went to the Berklee School of Music, or people who teach music professionally. I couldn't even tell you all the notes on a guitar. As far as singing, I don't think that what I do is a very traditional sort of singing. I see it as the band—the four of us—saw something that we are good at doing and good at doing together. That's creating music. We've taken what we're good at, and we've sort of brought our beliefs into that. So I think that we're taking the things that we're talented at doing and making sure that it's something more than just playing music. I try to live as unselfishly as possible and realize that we have been given the privilege to be on stage, write records, and have a fan base. We decided to use that to further more than just our merch sales or our record sales, but additionally further the ideas that were passed down to us by the punk rock generation before us. ■



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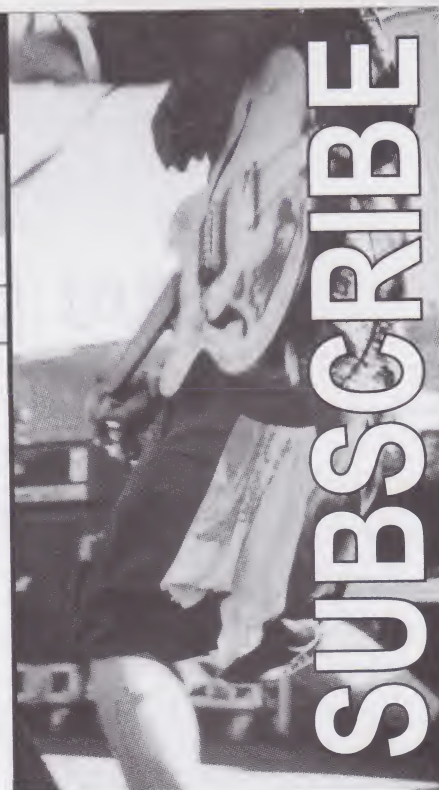
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TERROR

Bloody Noses & Broken Limbs

Speaking with Terror frontman Scott Vogel over the phone, it's hard to imagine the former Buried Alive vocalist laid up on his couch waiting for a doctor to say the two slipped discs in his neck have healed enough so he can play shows again. Since the release of their debut two-song EP in 2002, the *Don't Need Your Help* seven-inch, Terror have been running full-throttle, satisfying hardcore fans' need for shows that would make your mother worry if she knew you were there. "Once the doctor tells me that playing shows won't fuck me up for good," says Vogel, "I'll be good to go." With a new full length out on Trustkill and a tour with Sick Of It All on the horizon, he should be better than good in no time at all.

Fans worried that the band has changed their sound to accompany their move to Trustkill will not be disappointed. Terror's debut full length, *One With The Underdogs*, does not differ from the hardcore sound and ideals that have been their specialty since their first practice. This is not to say that the band hasn't grown musically, though. "I think it's a complete album in every way," Vogel assures. "It's got fast, mid-tempo, and even some slow parts. The next album will probably be the same. What do people want me to do...start singing?" When you've achieved the level of success that Terror has there's no reason to risk alienating true fans for passing musical trends.

One significant change is the absence of original member and ex-guitarist for the infamous California straightedge band Carry On, Todd Jones. "On our first European tour, which was over a year ago, [Todd] came to us and said that he couldn't

handle being on the road like that," says Vogel. "We had been on the road for seven or eight months straight and everyone else was really psyched. Living in a van with the same six dudes isn't for everyone, though." While the band still keeps in touch with Jones, his role in the band has faded away. The group brought in guitarist Franc Novinec to fill Jones' spot alongside original members Nick Jett (drums), Doug Weber (guitar), and Carl Schwartz (bass), who moonlights as the singer for the *Rambo*-themed hardcore band First Blood.

As if Terror doesn't have enough street-cred already, hardcore heavyweights Jamey Jasta of Hatebreed, Lord Ezac of Skarhead, and Freddy Madball all make cameo appearances on the new album. "Madball was one of the main reasons that Terror started. They're probably our biggest influence," comments Vogel, "and I think without Hatebreed, hardcore would be fucking lost." While these cameos are easy to digest, the rhymes of Los Angeles hip-hop outfit Dilated Peoples may come as more of a surprise. "So many people, when they think of hip-hop, think of bullshit radio stations," remarks Vogel, "I thought it would be cool to get someone on our record who was representing real hip-hop." After all, hardcore and hip-hop both started as music from the streets.

Whatever Terror do, they like to keep things real in the diluted world hardcore has become. When meeting with the band for a photo shoot, they were about to play their first show at one of the most legit hardcore venues around: New York's own CBGB. "The only other time I played CB's was with my old

band Despair back when Hatebreed was just getting big. We didn't get a huge response," Vogel recalls. "It was really good to go back there and have kids going nuts."

Several months after the show, Terror was back in the tri-state area for Hellfest. Unfortunately Vogel was out of commission, but rather than cancel, bassist Carl Schwartz took the mic. "People were psyched to see Carl out there because First Blood doesn't really get to tour much," says Vogel. "People don't really understand the amount of work that goes into putting on a big event like that. It gives bands like us a chance to play to all different kinds of people, and that's what we're about. We couldn't cancel on that."

An event like Hellfest is a great chance to see a lot of great bands at once, but it's also a chance to see how much hardcore has changed since its heyday. "When I first started going to shows it was kids coming from cities that had more struggle in their life," remarks Vogel. "Now it seems like a lot of the kids are more mall kids. A lot of the bands are singing about made-up anger to give the band some push or some fire to the music. It's not real."

Regardless of what Hot Topic tells kids to listen to, Terror is determined to continue making real and sincere hardcore. "We're just normal kids who dress normal. We have straightedge kids and meat eaters and vegans and we embrace anyone who's really into hardcore," says Vogel. "Hardcore is really my only family and friends." Do not expect an injured neck or anything else to stand in Terror's way. ■



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dj dangermouse

turns heads makes bodies move and makes history

I think it is safe to say that any music lover with half an eye open this past year was privy to the wide array of controversy, coverage, and criticism regarding Brian Burton, a.k.a. DJ Dangermouse, a.k.a. "the guy who mixed together *The White Album* by The Beatles and *The Black Album* by Jay-Z."

This clever feat was the result of a spur of the moment idea by Burton. He tells *DJ Times*, "I had always done mash-ups and I had sent mash-ups to the guys at Warp Records which helped me get a deal. So, [the idea] made sense." A mash-up is not unlike a remix, but it uses pre-existing songs, usually from established artists.

In this particular instance, EMI Music Publishing immediately sent Dangermouse a cease and desist letter on behalf of The Beatles songs, and while he complied out of the same fear that any of us might experience if a giant corporation were to threaten our creative and personal well-being, the album went on to become the most heavily downloaded album ever. "Yup. More than one million downloads," the humble Dangermouse admits. While the music industry would like us to believe that this honor belongs to The Beatles or Michael Jackson, it actually belongs to a kid from Rockland Country, New York whose greatest claim to fame had previously been as a competitive go-kart racer.

Downhill Battle, an activist group devoted to analyzing and combating mainstream music's use of control and lofty power, quickly counter-attacked EMI's corporate claws. They banded together with 170 internet music, media, and free-speech groups and websites to organize Grey Tuesday, a site where *The Grey Album* was offered to downloaders for free in protest of EMI's arbitrary claims. Grey Tuesday's website (www.greytuesday.org) states, "we can confidently report that *The Grey Album* was the number 1 album in the US on February 24 by a large margin. Dangermouse moved more "units" than Norah Jones and Kanye West...."

Nicholas Reville, one of Downhill Battle's co-founders, notes "We do know he [Brian Burton] was flattered by the attention as a young, independent artist, but we decided not to use this as intentional promotion for him as a DJ and musician in his own right. *The Grey Album* was the direct result of file sharing and free distribution of music. He has become a star by disrupting the notion that stars like Jay-Z and Paul McCartney are totally untouchable as artists."

"Legal infringement" is an extremely vague way of saying "you stole from me." This term has been a rallying battle cry for the major labels and entertainment lawyers working on behalf

of their big-name clients. However, if you listen to any number of older records from Vanilla Ice's hit "Ice Ice Baby" (which took from Queen's "Under Pressure") to any Public Enemy recordings, you realize that hip-hop is a music that was once defined by its sampling and pastiche, but somewhere along the line, money came into the equation and altered its purpose forever.

Names like Kid606 and Freelance Hellraiser are becoming just as popular and viable in their own right as music makers, and all of them have taken the art (or copyrights) of others and changed it, manipulating it into something new and commercially up-to-date. But these music makers continue to be vilified as legal boat-rockers, not because Jay-Z is losing money from the millions he has already made, but because attention is turned away from him and onto someone else who, with far less power, money, time, and assistance, has created something that the public responds to with just as much if not more passion and excitement.

Grey Tuesday's popularity clearly indicates that the copyright laws are in need of reform. The music world is experiencing change and it is time that the laws governing this world follow suit. "Remixes and pastiche are a defining aesthetic of our era. How will artists continue to work if corporations can outlaw what they do?" asks Reville.

This album is a wildly popular cultural marker because it serves to dismantle the framework of fame and money that the record industry has established. "Jay-Z chose to release those *a capella*," says Reville. "He knew something would be done with them, though maybe not anything to this magnitude. But what it really does is align him with The Beatles - I doubt he minds that."

As for Dangermouse, he is back in his hole working on his next album of original material, likely staying away from the sampling that has made him one of the hottest and most contested artists in recent history. Meanwhile, the rest of us now know that changing and reforming a system that seems to only benefit large corporations will be a joint effort between the music producers and the listeners who keep them in business. ■

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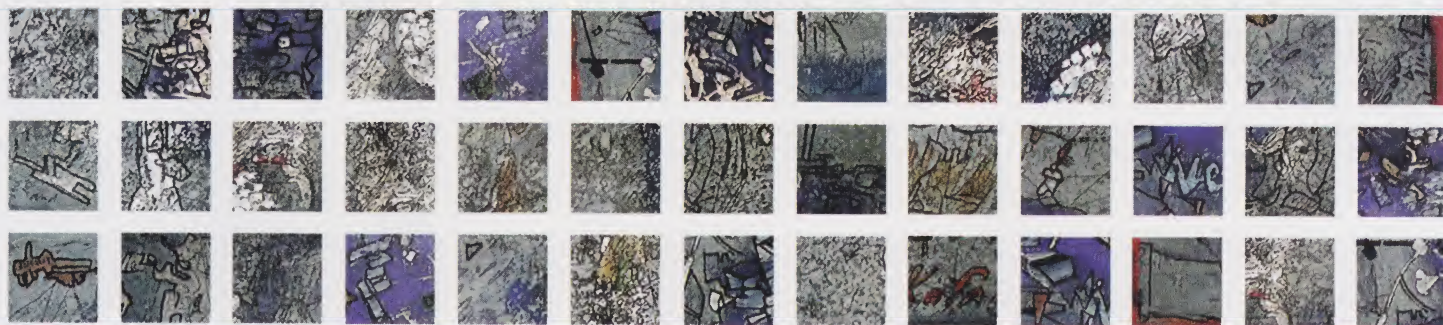
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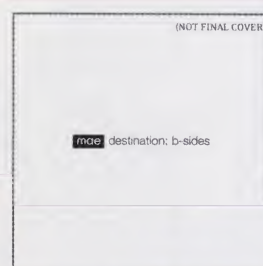
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Less Than Jake

defending your life

Co-Defendants: None

Less Than Jake has gone from a DIY touring staple to opening for mega acts like Snoop Dogg, Korn, and Bon Jovi. Vinnie Fiorello and Chris Demakes sat down to talk about punk's mainstream presence and their recent "less-than-punk" approach.

In the song "Johnny Quest Thinks We're Sellouts" there's a line about keeping ticket and record prices low for the fans. Is this still as important of an issue to you guys now as it was then?

Fiorello: The super important thing for us is to keep a leash on the merch pricing and the ticket pricing. As the band goes, we're out on a tour now that costs \$56 per ticket, so in a situation that's beyond our control you eat your own words. At the same time, we are a touring band so if you don't want to pay the price now we're going to come back in six to eight months and you can see us then. For us as a band, we have to do things that are interesting too, which means that we might do festival shows or Warped Tour, or this tour—I mean hell, we went on tour with Bon Jovi. For us, it's just to keep things interesting. It might not go with the ethos of the band, but the tedium of going on the same tour over and over again is a bit much.

You've signed with a major label again and have this *B Is For B-Sides* record out. Is this partially a reaction to you guys getting older and having more responsibilities and a need to keep the bills paid?

Fiorello: Not necessarily. When we were writing for *Anthem*, we thought, "Well, we could take these songs and we could bring them to a different level than what we were at with that record." To be honest with you, as time goes on you want the most amount of people to hear your band as possible. With that said, the vehicle for that, seemingly, is a major label.

Demakes: The kids don't even care anymore like they did in '96 or '97, they just don't. Very few kids even ask, "Why'd you sign to a major label?" That used to be the staple question in interviews to get kids' panties in an uproar. Maybe it's a cyclical thing or whatever, maybe they'll start caring again, but the majority of kids don't really care. It used to be, "Why are you on that label?" It used

to be more of a malicious thing versus a curiosity thing.

Do you feel that you are being portrayed correctly through the major media outlets like VH1 and MTV?

Fiorello: It's sort of blips on the radar. It's not this menacing force that is Less Than Jake controlling the airways—it's never this weird saturation. Yeah, the video has been played on MTV and its been played on Fuse, but it hasn't been played 85 times, it's not in super high alert rotation. People will look at little sporadic things like, "Oh, you were on MTV or in this magazine or you're on a major." They are just looking at such a small picture of what is the whole of Less Than Jake.

Some people critique *Anthem* for being a little too produced and over-simplified. Do you guys consider it more a result of your musical maturation?

Demakes: I think we would have written the same album if we recorded for Fat Wreck. Not to take anything away from the producer, but he took songs that we crafted in a warehouse in Florida that we'd been playing for months and he just recorded them really well. We went to a nice studio and recorded, but aside from actually producing the songs, he didn't do much. We didn't do much. After we wrote them we went and recorded them and that's how they came out. I think that if it would've come out on Fat Wreck you would have probably saw more of the B-sides record on it, more of those songs would have ended up on *Anthem*. That would have been the only difference.

Finally, with *Fueled By Ramen* and the *Monkey Vs. Robot* toy line, are there any more business ventures that we should look out for?

Fiorello: With *Fueled By Ramen* we're actually not going to put any records out until January. Actually, the last thing that we're doing is the Less Than Jake DVD that's coming out August 10, which, by the way, is like three hours of insanity. That is a good representation of our band, the whole feel of it, going from the smaller shows to the bigger shows. With the toy company, the whole first series is out now and I'll probably do a second series before Christmas. With Less Than Jake, we'll probably do this tour and then start writing for our next album. Then we'll record and go back out on the road. **[Frank Corva]**



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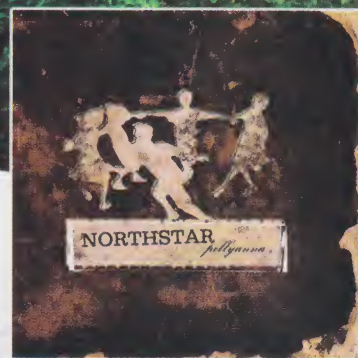
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A MATTER OF BALANCE



El Paso, Texas is historically revered as a city of gunslingers, saloons, and desert heat. To this day, Hollywood pays homage to the outlaws that sprang forth from this city such as Abraham Gonzalez and Pancho Villa. As the last of these bandits retired their holsters nearly 70 years ago, El Paso's reputation retired with it, and for quite some time it existed as a quiet American town just north of the Rio Grande. Still, American towns share American traditions, and nothing breaks the silence more than old-fashioned rock and roll. Enter At The Drive-In. They kicked up the dust in El Paso, then blazed a trail across the world.

One of the most unique, culturally significant rock band of the last 10 years, they stirred a commotion so large that it led to non-stop commercial radio airplay and a tour slot supporting Rage Against The Machine. Then, seemingly from nowhere, At The Drive-In collapsed at the height of its popularity with the members calling for an indefinite hiatus. A band that had toured for six years straight simply stopped, a decision that left fans stumped and the industry in an uproar. At The Drive-In breaking up was a disappointment to the world of music, but every cloud has its silver lining, and in this situation it was an EP called *Austere* from a new band named Sparta.

At the moment, Jim Ward and his bandmates in Sparta are in Columbus, Ohio enjoying their lunch break from filming a video for the song "Breaking The Broken." It's the lead single from their second album, *Porcelain*. The band is currently on tour with Incubus, one of the largest alternative rock bands in the world right now. Sparta has come a very long way since recording *Austere* nearly three years ago in their hometown and their frontman is happy to shed some light on their journey.

Jim Ward's shy, congenial nature is not at all disguised over the phone. "The tour is going well," he says humbly, "If we can get out there with our half-hour set and turn some people on to it, well, that's the point of the tour. We are very excited to be a part of this. I bought [Incubus'] record and I really enjoyed it. There is a mutual respect between both bands." After the cancellation of this year's Lollapalooza festival, Sparta was invited to support one of the summer's biggest tours. Without hesitation they jumped on and hoped to appeal to a huge fanbase that missed At The Drive In. Touring has been a constant in he and his bandmates' lives for what is closing in on a decade.

Despite their arena status, Sparta has not abandoned its roots. The band embarked on a small club tour prior to the release of *Porcelain* to keep up their chops and test out some new tunes in a more energetic, live setting. "It's easier for us to play in the clubs because, for one, the kids know who we are and are there to see us. It's easier to exchange energy in that setting, too," he states. "But I like the arenas as well; it's all a matter of balance. We've toured with Weezer and Pearl Jam, too, and those Pearl Jam shows were huge."

Ward is clearly pleased with how things are running in the Sparta camp. After all, arenas and civic centers are a far cry from the shows he performed while playing with the "50 or so" other bands he was in while growing up. "The music scene in El Paso is actually pretty bad," Ward recounts. "It's either these arena shows or small, small shows in tiny places. That's where I met Paul and Tony, though. They were in this metal band and I was the indie-pop kid."

The metal influence of Sparta guitarist Paul Hinojos and drummer Tony Hajjar is evident in the band's crushing sound that is just as potent on record as it is live. How the three ended up starting a new band after their old one called it quits took some time and soul searching. "Paul and Tony were living in L.A. after At The Drive-In broke-up," remembers Ward. "They came to my house in El Paso four months or so after things went down and asked if I wanted to start a new band and sing. I actually said no at first. I'd never sung before, except for back-ups in At The Drive-In, but that was mostly screaming and I didn't have to write any lyrics. But it was a simple decision. I was in 100 bands, you know? One breaks up, you start a new one." Although it quickly became an obvious choice for Ward to start a new project with his former bandmates, speaking of his old band in such listless terms seems a little odd.

"Don't get me wrong; I am proud of At The Drive-In. I am proud of what that band accomplished, and for five guys to come from El Paso and get that big—I feel it was a real homage to our hometown," he says sternly. "I'm happy that the five members of At The Drive-In went on to different things and are succeeding. I'm happy that nobody is a welder or some shit; that nobody sits around drinking talking about the good 'ole days. We are all still involved with music and I am proud of that." Although more than content with their past, the three were not interested in re-creating it.

When I arrive at the fact that Sparta sounds completely different from their previous band and ask if it was at all intentional, Ward simply replies, "*Austere* and *Wiretap Scars* were not part of any agenda. It was just what came out, you know? *Wiretap* was a collaboration; it was the three of us writing, a collage of three personalities." One would assume that those three personalities were under an immense amount of pressure to create something great. Ward snickers at the notion, and explains that time of his life as calm and not stressful.

"To be honest, I didn't feel any pressure for *Wiretap*. Even the first six months of press or whatever, it didn't affect me." He adds, "It was nothing like the hype that surrounded At The Drive-In. That hype, man," he sighs, "that was enough for me. I never need to experience that again." Ward comes across as having more faith in himself and his art than before, and notes that he and his bandmates are non-receptive to the disillusionment that oftentimes comes along with rock stardom. "At the Drive-In did not sell as many records as the press led on," he states. When I bring up KROQ's contest in 2001 to fly two lucky winners out to the "morally loose" atmosphere of Amsterdam to hang out and party with At The Drive-In, Ward follows an awkward pause by saying, "We were definitely led into an atmosphere with that band that was just not for us."

As the saying goes, this is all old hat. The members of Sparta have matured in both focus and determination. Primarily concerned with pleasing themselves and doing right by their instincts, the band opted out of writing and recording in the plush arrangements of L.A. and headed back

into the desert.

"We wrote *Porcelain* out in Joshua Tree at [Queens Of The Stone Age frontman] Josh Homme's place." As unlikely an atmosphere as that seems for the band, they were more than content with their surroundings. "We stayed there for a month and a half just writing and practicing everyday. Mike [Major, producer] came out there and bunked with us," recounts Ward. "Writing *Porcelain* was a very organic process because there was so much growth. We recorded the record live, you know? *Porcelain* is four guys who played together for 18 months. A lot of gelling occurred during that time."

Sparta then traveled to New York City to lay down the tracks that would ultimately become their second record. Things were going smoothly until it was time for Ward to record his vocals (featuring lyrics he had written entirely on his own). He was exhausted and, humbly, needed to return to El Paso. "I really love the way the record sounds, but I could not stay in New York to record the vocals. I wanted to go back to El Paso. I wanted to be with my wife and I wanted to play with my dog," he laughs. "It's a straining process, recording vocals for five or six hours a day. I needed to be home."

In terms of standard rockstar convention, needing to return home to spend time with his wife and puppy is certainly atypical, especially for Sparta, who basically live on the road. When asking how his wife feels about his relentless schedule Ward happily replies, "Oh man, I met her eight years ago, she's used to it!"

The way Sparta went about creating this record yielded awesome results, featuring brave new songs like "La Cerca" and "Hiss The Villain" that crush from beginning to end against personal, dynamic songs like "Lines In Sand." Private, thought-provoking matters still claim the bulk of Ward's lyrics, but on *Porcelain* the band was also inspired by our nation's current political climate.

"Absolutely there are politically meaningful songs," states Ward. "We're taking off [Nov. 2nd] to vote. I saw *Fahrenheit 9/11*, man, and I cried all the way through it. This environment completely inspires me. I'm trying to get a 'Get Out And Vote Day' in El Paso, like the thing we just did in Chicago." Ward is, of course, referring to an extremely successful benefit show which Sparta put together. Kids were admitted to a free performance after picking up *Porcelain* at local mom and pop stores and registering to vote outside of the venue. The event was a resounding success and something the band plans on doing in the near future.

As for musical inspiration, Ward looks to his buddies in Coldplay to turn him onto new things while sticking with the classics. "I'm close friends with the guys in Coldplay. I am really into that band. They turn me on to a lot of Britpop, which I love, that doesn't make its way over here to the States. There are some amazing bands and a band like Ash comes to mind. Also, U2. U2 are my Beatles." Hearing a successful musician speak so excitedly about music is refreshing to say the least, but I soon find that there is a simple question you can ask that can alter Jim's mood instantaneously.

When inquiring in regard to his thoughts on his former bandmates, Cedric Bixler and Omar Rodriguez-Lopez, and their new band The Mars Volta, the jaded side of Jim Ward presents itself, perhaps for the first time. "The Mars Volta is not my cup of tea, but I am happy for those guys if that is what they wanted," he says faintly. "I don't know, people think there is this weird thing between us. Of course we still speak." Jim is accepting of the At The Drive-In mystique and naturally understands people's affection for his former band. "Last night I met a kid that had to be 12 wearing an At The Drive-In shirt and he was telling me how much he liked that band. That band broke up when he was like nine! We made our first record when he was like two!" he quips. "I'm glad people pick it up still, but I don't want it to undermine what I am doing now."

The members of Sparta have a rich history and a promising future, especially considering their attitude. When asking Ward if he ever gets nostalgic for the carefree days of old he replies, "I don't get nostalgic, man. We just toured western Canada in a van. That's how we work. If we're not big somewhere we just go there and tour the shit out of it. That is success." ■





My Chemical Romance

JERSEY'S BEST ROMANCERS

Few bands in any genre of music have skyrocketed to success as quickly as My Chemical Romance. After a humble beginning in early 2002, the New Jersey quintet jumped from playing VFW halls with peers Senses Fail and Murder By Death to the ranks of touring alongside huge acts like The Used and Alkaline Trio. Combining their penchant for punk rock, metal, and macabre art, My Chemical Romance became one of the fastest, freshest bands of 2003 and sees no end in sight. Frontman Gerard Way is ecstatic about his band's touring success as well as their major label debut, *Three Cheers For Sweet Revenge*. Aside from starting a recent eyeliner trend, for which even he is a little apologetic, there are nothing but blue skies ahead for the dark minds of he and his band mates.

"It is amazing to see the difference every week when we play a show. The crowds just keep getting bigger. Sometimes every few days, you know?" says Way of the band's jaunt on this year's Warped Tour. "It is pretty exciting. We're just finishing Warped. We did the first half, so we're doing the Chicago show and we're doing the Boston show and that's it." Way seems saddened by the fact that his band's stint on Warped is coming to a close; watching your band grow exponentially must be a hard thing from which to let go. Before the huge tours and the major label budget, though, My Chemical Romance was simply a few friends in New Jersey with goals no loftier than creating some cool music.

I Brought You My Bullets, You Brought Me Your Love was My Chemical Romance's debut full length from then up and coming label Eyeball Records. Despite being recorded on a shoestring budget, the release was critically acclaimed and sold out of its first run in nearly a week. "We thought it was going to be a really good cult-punk rock record," claims Way. "When we made the record we had a very good vibe about it. We didn't think it was going to make us explode, we thought it was going to do what it needed it to do." And a classic cult-punk record it was, especially with the production aid of Thursday vocalist Geoff Rickly, who has a proclivity towards making cult records himself.

"He was amazing," Way excitedly states of Rickly. "The best things I learned from him was really how I delivered the lines. He would make me think about what the lines really meant and why I was singing them the way I was. He just brought the best performances out of me. It was really fun because it was like hanging out with your best friend for two weeks because, up until that point, we hadn't done anything together musically." Way, a graphic artist, formed a close bond with Rickly after making a t-shirt design for Thursday several years prior. "I still see kids wearing it from time to time," he happily notes.

The greatest aspect of My Chemical Romance's career is that things were not put in place by industry professionals generating hype. The rapid growth of the band was and is a product of friendship and respect.

"With those bands our relationship is amazing," exclaims Way of Thursday and The Used. "Those are both really big bands that heard our band and went 'this is something fresh and new and we want them involved with the tours we're going on.'"

After touring for a whole year with indie and major label acts alike, Way and his bandmates needed to take some time to once again assess their values and goals for the band. Part of this process was dealing with their fair share of music industry personnel. "I think people realized from the get-go that they weren't going to get anywhere by trying to put stuff up our nose or trying to take us out. We obviously weren't a wine and dine band and weren't interested in money. We were interested in a career," Way states firmly. Playing the major label game is not the easiest process in the world, especially since it involves discerning who is there for your art, and who is there for the money.

"We knew they could all put our record in the stores; it was about finding the right label that got us the most mentally and really understood us," he recalls. "When we would walk into a label and meet all the people, right down to the guy that made the major decisions, they had to know our [first] record inside and out. That was the hardest thing to find. It's very easy to walk into a major [label] and have people pretend to know you [rather] than find people that are really intimate with your material." In such a tense, confusing situation, most young bands have a tendency to collapse under the pressure and, after all, My Chemical Romance had only existed for a year when this bidding war started.

"We told them to back off and give us time to develop so we could learn more about our band and more about each other. I think that's why we survived the whole thing," claims the frontman. "I know six bands off the top of my head that went and had that done to them and then split, or got screwed over and had their shit sitting on a shelf." It is all too common for indie bands nowadays to become major label casualties, often times being forced to put out records that alienate themselves from the scene they came from and the fanbase they initially developed. My Chemical Romance was smart enough to avoid this, and used their newfound budget and producer much to their advantage.

Way remembers working with *Three Cheers For Sweet Revenge* producer Howard Benson as a pleasant, inspiring environment for both parties. "He never had to say, 'this shit sounds like the shit you played yesterday,' so he was always wondering where we were coming from with songwriting. Although he would say, 'All right, why does this song have to be six minutes long?' We never had a good answer for him!" laughs Way. "So when we never had a good answer, that is when we would meet half way and trim stuff out."

Still, major labels are moneymaking machines and what matters at the end of the day is rarely how happy the artist is. However, Way explains that there was no pressure on My



Chemical Romance to write a single and put it on their record. "There was nothing like that at all," he states. "Then there was a point in pre-production where our A&R guy was like, 'Well, if you want to push certain songs in certain directions, you have about six [possible singles].' After that we just sat down and took our thumbs out of our asses and said, 'Hey, let's make great music now. Let's fucking cut the pretense, the bullshit, and let's stop jerking ourselves off and start making great music that really moves people.' In making that decision the writing process got easier, the songs got better, and it got to the point where it became extremely palatable for everyone who was listening to it." Although Way claims there was no pressure to create a single, *Three Cheers for Sweet Revenge* certainly yielded one in "I'm Not Okay (I Promise)."

"It was an immediate thing. From the very first time we played that song live it was incredible," says Way of the hit single. "As soon as the drums kick in and things start blasting, nobody can help themselves from jumping around and freaking out. 'We had that song a little bit after *Bullets* but didn't know what to do with it. It sounded different; we had the main riff and didn't know where to go, so we almost scrapped it. Then our A&R guy and manager were like, 'Can you guys please finish this song! We have a good feeling about it,' so we just got it done." Way is pleased with the results and is also excited to learn that his band has joined the ranks of Taking Back Sunday, Brand New, and Coheed & Cambria on regular commercial airplay.

"I think it is really exciting. If you want to genre categorize those bands with ours, there is still nothing alike except a lot of energy and passion and it is really exciting to hear some thing different on the radio." Arguing with that statement is indeed a difficult thing to do. It is true: radio sucks and My Chemical Romance are happy to take part in changing that. With success, however, comes the backlash. In the indie-press and by bands that came from the same scene as themselves, My Chemical Romance (along with Coheed and Taking Back Sunday) are often referred to as the equivalent of glam metal bands from the '80s—poster boys for an annoying trend that refused to die. Way takes these comments in stride.

"Well, to me glam metal is the bastard son of really good bands like Iron Maiden. For this kind of music, we haven't had an Iron Maiden yet, we have Thursday," he states emphatically. "These are still the original bands. I would expect in a year or two from now to have bands that look and act and pretend to be like our bands and that would be the glam metal. Right now, to me, this is the movement and the glam metal is going to come afterwards," he predicts.

"When you start to get people where the only thing that matters is what they dress like, cloning the names, cloning the album covers... if you really want to break it down there is a formula to all of this. Geoff [Ricky] and I love The Smiths and The Cure, so there is a pattern that comes out of our generation, and if you want to put it under a microscope and copy it, you can. I only think it is a matter of time before that starts happening." For Way, his band and his friends' bands are only doing what they know and love. There is always going to be the stigma of "selling out" around any band that shifts from indie to major. My Chemical Romance are Jersey boys, though, and like Saves The Day and Thursday before them, that is where they will always be rooted.

"Our relationship with New Jersey is amazing because we kind of come back there every six months or even longer because we do so much touring, and we'll do a show and thousands of people will come," Way fondly states of his home state. "To us, if we broke down the shows in New Jersey and wrote down the numbers, it would have been five kids, 15 kids, 80 kids, then 1000 kids. It was really weird, very crazy."

With so much "amazing" stuff going on in Way's life, you have to begin to wonder if anything goes wrong for the guy or his band. The singer has, however, admitted to mental breakdowns

in the past, and was well on his way to one during the recording of *Three Cheers For Sweet Revenge*.

"I needed a couple of days to finish artwork, I had two songs that needed lyrics, and my window to record the vocals was that week," he remembers. "If I didn't finish the vocals, the songs wouldn't have been done or wouldn't have been on the record, which means the record wouldn't be finished. I was living in this apartment in L.A. for like three months and I had to get the hell out of it. I left this note for the band, they know me well so they took it for what it was, and I knew they wouldn't be worried about me."

The note for the band, however, worried not only his bandmates but also his fans. Way disappeared, nobody knew where he was, and the band reached out on their website to see if anyone knew of his whereabouts. Today Way denies any allegations of this being a publicity stunt and looks back on it as a stupid and even selfish move.

"Kids ended up being really worried about me and I didn't realize that would happen. That is what made me feel very irresponsible. I was like, 'Wait a minute, now it is different, people are actually worried about us as people.' It was really just me needing to clear my head out and finish some things, but it turned into something else." Realizing that your personal life is a matter of public opinion is a weird occurrence that any celebrity can attest to. Gerard took this aspect of his life and, like everything else, just ran with it.

"It was a little scary, but I decided I was going to be a man and accept this responsibility. I am responsible for this now; I have a responsibility as an artist to not terrify the shit out of my fans. There were kids driving around Hollywood looking for me and that's kind of scary, so I realized I needed to be more responsible." Touring eight months of the year certainly shifts your notion on exactly what "responsibility" really is, and Gerard Way will be the first to admit that he hasn't handled everything gracefully thus far, especially touring with renowned partier and vocalist for The Used, Bert McCracken.

"We kind of raised hell together and got wasted and partied until like six in the morning," laughs Way. "We were two of the worst people for a tour manager to have to deal with. We were totally going nuts and both of us were pretty hard to control." In the year 2004, the "chemical romance" aspect of Gerard's personality is still present.

"I have some issues with drinking, but I've managed to keep them in check. Warped Tour is a really good place to find support and you kind of have no choice: it is so damned hot that you're not going to drink at noon, as much as you might want to," he quips, "but it was a good way to get my body healthier, getting out of that stuff."

My Chemical Romance is on the rise and Gerard Way is thrilled about this ascent. Things have changed so much for him and his bandmates over the past two years that it is hard for him to take it all into account. No longer living in the shadows of the larger bands that helped them along the way, Way is trying to figure himself out, move away from the past, and welcome the future.

"I am definitely getting more of a mental footing and singing the songs live. Now there is more of a release. They are more genuine and moving because there is more reality instead of this whole supernatural thing," he contends. "I think people expected there to be more of a supernatural element like on the first record, if they thought we were going to talk about mummies or fucking werewolves," he quips. "I still meet kids who are like, 'So, you're a vampire!' and I say, 'No, I am nothing like that at all!'" ■

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Weapons of mass destruction have been both the cause and end of wars. The nuclear blast, glowing 50 times brighter than the sun, is unrivaled as the most destructive force from the human imagination. Even though only two nuclear bombs have been detonated during wartime, approximately 260,000 people have died as a result. In many ways, the nuclear bomb is the most ambitious and curious invention in history—it remains the only human creation that has the power to destroy our planet in one fell swoop.

In October 2003, artist Michael Light published a collection of photographs entitled *100 Suns* which narrates America's nuclear testing history. The images—previously classified material in the Lookout Mountain Air Force Station whose only observers were sworn to secrecy—are now available to the public, though some remain classified or were “lost” during the transition into the public domain.

The collection consists of 100 photographs of nuclear tests performed between July 1945 and November 1962. Above ground testing came to an end on August 5, 1963 when the U.S. signed the Limited Test Ban Treaty with the Soviet Union, which drove nuclear testing underground and out of the public eye. After signing the treaty, the U.S. conducted 723 underground tests. The final nuclear test was performed on September 23, 1992, nine months after the Soviet Union dissolved.

Michael Light based the title of his book, *100 Suns*, around an apocalyptic quote from the Manhattan Project's enigmatic director, J. Robert Oppenheimer: “If the radiance of a thousand suns were to burst forth at once in the sky, that would be like the splendor of the Mighty One. I have become Death, the destroyer of worlds.” A talk with Light on why he purchased these photos and released them to the public is recounted here.

What was your purpose in releasing *100 Suns*?

I'm a visual artist. I deal mostly with photography, the landscape, and how we as people relate to the larger environment. *100 Suns* deals with photographs that were made by folks in the military from 1945 to 1962 and is kind of an historical journey into another time and place. *100 Suns* grew organically from the larger concerns of my work. I like my work to take a viewer to the edge of human efficacy, to the edge of human comprehension to some degree, and to try and contemplate really, really, really, big subjects. I was interested in a kind of distilled landscape vocabulary as well as taking on another really big issue. I'm just a normal visual person, a normal citizen. I'm not a scientist, much less a nuclear physicist, and I was always curious. What is the bomb? How does it work, what does it mean, and how can I understand it? *100 Suns*, on a primal level, is my attempt to understand this hugely influential fact that will be with the culture of all countries until the last breath humans take. This knowledge is not going to go away. Obviously, the moment when humans unlocked the power of the fabric of matter was a big moment in the history of culture and civilization, arguably the most important or the greatest accomplishment that tool-bearing humans have pulled off, right?

I noticed that in a lot of interviews you use the phrase “the fabric of matter.” Could you explain that?

When I say “the fabric of matter,” I'm referring to the atomic structure that surrounds us throughout the universe. Your desk, your shoes, the sun, or that galaxy out there, and the galaxies beyond; the sort of fundamental building block of our physical world. It was an amazing moment when people figured out how to push things together, release energy, and how to split them apart. However, it was probably the greatest tragedy that the knowledge came about in the context of war. It was driven by World War II and the fear that Hitler would get this technology before we did. It was born out of war and was immediately put to use as the most destructive force that humans have ever devised. That double-headed monster is really worth contemplating. Aside from that, the bomb is profoundly destructive and could even result in the complete destruction of life as we know it. Not a subject that people want to think about. If we're lucky enough to live in democracies where, in theory, we can actually vote and have some control over the direction of our nation, the more informed we are as voting citizens, the better off we are. So in that sense, I really kind of wanted to go in and examine this thing that we don't like to look at in general, this thing that is very taboo for obvious reasons. The most obvious reasons are, of course, Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the profound human destruction that they resulted in.

Did you see anything that you just couldn't believe people hadn't seen yet?

Yeah, that's the fun part. That's where I'm hopefully contributing something to the visual culture. It's kind of fun because these pictures are in the public domain. You just show your driver's license and off you go. But they haven't really been seen yet; nobody's really done anything like this book. I knew I was going to see a lot of mushroom clouds and a lot of clichéd iconic images that we're fairly familiar with. What amazed me were all these pictures of soldiers at the point of detonation that had been put there against their will and observers for the media, quite close to the detonation. Many of these people are dead of cancer at this point so it was very poignant in that sense. What was great with all the images with people was that they were very intimate and personal. You had Jeff's shoulder and Tom's head and John's back, and then off in the distance would be the great iconic massive mushroom cloud. There was a kind of relationship in the book between humans and what we would call—it's not exactly the natural world—but the forces of the universe. The interesting thing on a metaphysical level about nuclear knowledge and application is that for the first time we're making our own stars. By the time we got to 1954 and we figured out fusion, we were basically creating our own suns. These are manmade suns; these are manmade universes. So they're not the natural world in the way we normally think about nature, but they are self-contained universes that follow the laws of nature. In landscape terms I find this interesting, setting aside the philosophical side, because for the first time with the bomb humans are creating their own sublime. Up until that point, the sublime was created by the natural world, or by God, or by some force outside ourselves. Now it's like, “Oh, okay, we're just going to make our own sublime.”

Looking at the images, they're beautiful and there are these gorgeous colors, but you think about what you're looking at and it's very dark and morbid.

It's a book about beauty. It's about seduction and repulsion, and it's about that fine line between those two things. It's about the seduction of power, and make no mistake, everyone was and is still



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seduced by the power of this knowledge. It is major power, no doubt about it. The weaponers were seduced, the physicists who dreamed it all up were seduced, the politicians were seduced, and the populace of the union and the states were seduced. And we still are seduced by this stuff. In this sense, *100 Suns* has a very deliberate political agenda because it forces people to confront within themselves without any moralizing or lecturing, this dichotomy between the seduction of power and the horror of the knowledge. It's a very volatile mix that verges on the pornographic. It's a very daring book in that sense because it can be misread. The images are intrinsically what I would call "hot." When I say pornographic, I don't mean pornographic in the erotic sense. For example, if you see images from the Holocaust on the street, you would stop and engage with those images just as you would stop and engage—not necessarily by getting aroused—if you see pages from some porno mag on the street. You would stop and say, "Whoa, someone's naked and getting it on on the sidewalk." Likewise, images of the bomb have this kind of intrinsic heat and power and to put 100 of them together was a risky thing to do. It was not easy to get this book published in six languages worldwide. One of the interesting things about the structure of the book is the names that were given to the tests by the U.S. military, which are stranger than fiction. They result in a kind of extraordinarily bitter, ironic, black humor. What you have is an image on the one side and the name on the other. The names range from "Climax" to "Zucchini" to "Dog" to "George" to "Yankee" to "Moth." The names function in a kind of conceptual way against the images; they play against the images. They create a level of ironic surrealism worthy of Stanley Kubrick and *Dr. Strangelove*.

Yeah, the names almost represent the delirium one must have experienced while actually watching it happen.

Exactly, the whole naming office of the military still comes up with doozies. "Operation Infinite Justice" had to be amended because it was offensive to the Islamic world. As a book, it's a very neutrally presented entity. It is very beautifully produced, minimally designed and well printed. The images are indeed beautiful, but I was worried that I would be accused of aestheticizing the bomb. Nobody has actually been that simple-minded. My stock answer is that I'm not aestheticizing the bomb. The bomb is inherently aesthetic, and if people find these images beautiful then they need to look at themselves and their own dynamics of what they find beautiful. I'm immensely angry as a person dealing with the political situation that we're in. I'm critical anyway, but I'm immensely angry with my nation because of the parallels. It was very depressing to go in and do the research for the text of the back of the book because I went way, way into the psychotic aspects of the Cold War. The U.S. and the USSR; both nations were truly out of their minds. It was very clear to me the deeper I went that, the parallels of overreaction to the situation of 9/11, the parallels of what have turned into a national overreaction, and the parallels of the overreactions and psychoses of the Cold War, were all extreme. Not exactly the same thing, but they're very, very similar. I was doing contextual research as we were slipping into war with Iraq. It's a bleak, dark book and I was glad to get it done and published. It's not angry as it is; it's not nihilistic. You know I'm angry, and I understand anger. I'm 41 now, but I used to listen to The Clash and the Bad Brains. I was around for the first realm of punk and I lived it. How do you translate rage and anger and despair about the direction your nation and the world either is in already or is heading towards? How do you translate that into not giving up, into keeping at it and working for change? These are enduring questions. ■

words: GENEVIEVE KESSLER



THE MAN BEHIND THE DYNAMITE

Napoleon Dynamite is not your traditional movie and Jon Heder is not your typical star. He's Mormon, he's married, and his off beat acting style stole the show in this year's breakout indie hit. I had the chance to catch up with him in Los Angeles to find out what's going on the life of this 26 year-old on the verge of something big, exactly what, even he's not quite sure.

Can you tell me a little bit about what's happening in the life of Napoleon Dynamite, a.k.a. Jon Heder?

Well, yesterday I got back from the Teen Choice Awards and that's where a lot of my perspective changed. You've got every sort of marketable thing in there. You have Usher, you have Ashlee Simpson, you have *The Newlyweds*, you have everything big and you have Napoleon who's just stuck in there. I mean ultimately we made the film with a college age audience in mind because there's an innocence to it, but there's also something that rings true to it because there's teens, and not just teens, but kids, eight year-olds, nine year-olds who are like, "Can I get your autograph, we loved the movie," and I'm like, "This is a weird movie, I haven't pegged the audience." You've got the independent audience which makes sense, then you've got the MTV generation, and then you've got the Nickelodeon side.

What about the 40 year-olds, are they diggin' it?

That kind of goes along with the independent side. The filmmakers, the Hollywood side, there are a lot of people in Hollywood who understand film so therefore they like it. I haven't really seen it hit a certain level with the senior citizens, other than my grandparents.

Are they number one fans?

Well they like it because I'm in it.

There you go. So how does it feel to be this budding cult movie star?

Well that's what I mean, I don't think I've quite grasped it. It's kind of a cult following but a cult star doesn't walk around with teenagers going, "Oh my Gosh!" I'm not saying I'm totally to that point yet but still there's moments. Last night at the show for example, where they were screaming and giving out their phone numbers and crap like that, and I don't think this what I want. I mean sure there's a certain aspect of "Hey this is nice that people like it so much" but I do prefer a quieter setting, the college crowd or the independent film audience that actually want to talk about the movie instead of, "Can we have your number? Can you say something to the camera? Can you leave a message for my friend?"

It seems like this had to be pretty unexpected.

It's kind of unexpected but when we shot it a year ago, we thought, "Hey, this could be big" because teens could watch it. It's a PG rated movie, it's got a ton of characters that are colorful and weird and if it hits right, it'll hit big. People were like, "You never know Jon, you could be walking around and people will be wanting your autograph." So I kinda thought about this and it wasn't totally unexpected but also it would have been weird if it didn't hit.

It seems like Sundance was that first big hit. What's happened since then that's made you realize this movie is really making an impact?

Sundance was definitely the beginning of the journey. It was like, "Okay, [Fox Searchlight] bought the film, so we know it's going to be in theaters sometime." Then they told us it's going to be towards the beginning of the summer when it comes out and throughout that time I was still going to BYU, so from January until May, I was in school, still doing my animation work, still keeping my head on, still leading a very normal life. Then I moved out to L.A. and things got crazy. My agents were already sending me scripts and I was starting to meet with people so I could do commercials for the movie and this is all happening right before the movie came out. It came out June 11th and I moved out to L.A. in June. I'm still living on an air mattress at a friend's producer's apartment, just doing promotional stuff, going to New York, doing stuff for MTV.

Can you think of one moment after the movie came out like something somebody said to you, or a phone call you got, where you started to realize, "Wow, this is really happening."

When the movie came out, it only opened in like six theatres in two cities and it's just now starting to really catch on. But I think when I did David Letterman, that was probably the most surreal moment. Just like, "All right dude, this is insane. I'm on David Letterman." I've always been into keeping up a little bit with pop culture, really studying actors and directors who are always there and I guess the surrealness is that I was never the kid of an actor, never grew up in Hollywood, never took acting classes, never did commercials. I first started doing a little bit of acting in college but that's because I was in film school, and that's not even a big deal because all guys who were film students were in their movies. I was the lead character for a few movies but nothing big. It was celebrity on a small scale. I'd be at a film festival at college and people would be like "Hey, good job on that thing." But then literally a year later all of a sudden you're

on Letterman and you're like, "How'd I get here?"

So how's life in L.A. now that you're living down here, on the air mattress?

It's okay, it's not my favorite, my wife is still living in Utah, still working, so that kind of sucks and I'm still trying to find my way around. I just got a car. My agents are being great and sending me tons of stuff so it's just kind of exciting with all the possibilities of things I could do, and that's cool, but I could never live in L.A. for the rest of my life. I grew up in Oregon and I would not mind living there for the rest of my life, in a nice place, doing what I want to do. I'd love to continue to do some acting, but my brother and I studied animation and ultimately it would be cool to start a company together and just do animation.

Are you starting to get recognized by people?

Maybe just a little bit more every day, nothing big.

But it's not bothersome at this point?

In general it's not bad, but yesterday I had a really bad experience at the aftershow party where my wife and I thought, "Oh let's go say hi to some of the people who were in the show." I don't know if there was a different party we didn't know about, or if [the other presenters] were like, "We're used to this, we don't go to these things," because pretty much all the teens from the audience were at this party, and when I showed up, it was like a spark caught onto this wild forest fire and I was there for like 35 to 45 minutes straight signing autographs and doing pictures. I'm a nice guy and I don't know how to say no and I can't stop them unless it literally got out of control, but it was starting to get out of control.

Well I guess one mob scene per movie isn't bad?

Maybe if I knew about it, I was just unprepared. If I already know, "Hey people are going to want to get photographs," that's fine, I've done that a couple times, but last night I wasn't expecting it.

Have you been out dancing at all in L.A., been to any clubs or anything like that?

I'm not a big clubber. I just like to dance in front of the mirror and that's about it. You know, I don't drink so I'm not a big partier. If I go, parties to me are a chance to talk with people and socialize, but I'm not into like, "Let's go get some booze, dance."

It's a different kind of movie and a different kind of star. Is it weird being one of the only Mormon actors in Hollywood?

Well it's not just weird, it's an interesting perspective. Sometimes I think, "Well, if I ever become big," I mean they say this is big but this may be all I ever do, but if I ever start to become something bigger, it's a bit of a, not name I have to carry, but I'd have some serious representation, and so far I think it's good, and I want it to be. But it's not just representing anybody, it's who I am, it's what I feel comfortable with. So there's something kind of cool about that. So far people have said "Mormons I guess aren't that bad." But at the same time Mormons are people, so there are dorky people and there are cool people and there are dorky Mormons and there are cool Mormons. It's just our religion, it doesn't make us a certain kind of person.

Yeah it just seems like something different, like it's not something that's normally associated with Hollywood. You never hear about a Mormon star.

And you're right, you don't hear about it because I guess the one thing a lot of people know about Mormons is that they are very strict with certain standards that they live by. And it depends on what kinds of exceptions you're willing to make in Hollywood because there's a lot of heavy material out there and my perspective is, "I'll look for the material that I feel comfortable with that's not too heavy and if I can't find anything then screw 'em. I won't do any more acting." But I'm going to keep my eyes open and I think there could be good stuff and that's why I kind of want to get into writing, directing, and doing animation.

So what's next? What's being considered? Anything signed in blood?

Nothing right now.

Everything's open?

Well I'm not interested in T.V. really, but hopefully more movies. Comedy, or serious comedy, something dramatic with a little bit of comedy, but nothing *dramatic*. I wouldn't mind doing either a dark comedy, dramedy, I don't know, whatever.

You're just going to enjoy this for a while and then figure out what the next step is?

Exactly. ■

ian MACKAYE

TURN THE RADIO OFF

Attentive readers of *Law of Inertia* will note that we've never covered Fugazi or its most notable member, Ian MacKaye. Perhaps it was intimidation, maybe it was awe, or it could have been the notion that everything interesting to ask the man who is perhaps the greatest living embodiment of all things punk has simply already been asked. So, we never dared to sit down with MacKaye, who has more stigma, rumors, and mystique attached to him than any other person in the past 25 years of underground music. Be it coining the term "straightedge" in his band Minor Threat—arguably the most important, influential, and groundbreaking hardcore band in the history of the genre—to his more visceral and overtly political work with the band Fugazi—MacKaye is as experienced as anyone in contemporary rock and roll. For that, he counts bands as diverse as 311, Deftones, Face To Face, and NOFX as admirers.

Perhaps that's why it comes as no surprise to anyone who has read one of the thousands of interviews that have been conducted with MacKaye that he is of unusually high intellect and remains overwhelmingly opinionated. For instance, when the conversation turns to popular culture, MacKaye freely admits he has no idea what is going on in mainstream cinema, music, television, or video games, and for him that is fine...he simply does not care. "If someone asked me if I had seen *Titanic* yet, I would be totally baffled. The idea that everyone is supposed to do something like seeing a certain movie is totally bizarre to me. Why would I do something just because everyone else has done it?" During a two and a half hour chat, he does not let up with this kind of minute scrutiny of ideas for even a moment. The conversation is both draining and stimulating. It's no wonder MacKaye is as respected as his reputation would have him. He is simply a walking calculator of ideas.

"I can't speak for anyone else when I tell you what I think," MacKaye claims. "I'm just one guy doing what I do. I'm not trying to change anyone or think for them." Even casual observers get the feeling that MacKaye goes out of his way to avoid being typical, which may be the very reason for his success. When he started Minor Threat, hardcore was a glimmer on the collective mindset of what was then an artsy and conceptual punk scene found in a handful of urban locations and comprised of experienced musicians. Minor Threat burst onto the scene and put their hometown of Washington, D.C. on the map, setting the standard for what is now a well-worn genre. Fugazi, conceived in 1987, has become one of the most influential rock and roll outfits ever due to their staunchly independent and firm do-it-yourself philosophy that has won them undying loyalty as well as bitter detractors. Still, MacKaye can't quite understand why Fugazi's sometimes-didactic approach is considered controversial.

"You say we're dogmatic?" he responds to my suggestion. "I think, if anything, we're the opposite of dogmatic. Dogmatic says to me that people are unwilling to listen, unwilling to change, and unwilling to grow. If anything, Fugazi is entirely un-dogmatic. I think we're completely organic, if anything." Dogmatic or not, it's easy to see how this man might have a tendency to catch many people not as liberal—or as thoughtful—as him off guard, and perhaps garner a horde of critics along the way.

Perhaps MacKaye's two most interesting personality traits are his unparalleled ability to focus and his attention to detail. For most people, two and a half hours discussing the minutia of everyday conversational diction might be exhausting—boring even. Not so for MacKaye. He simply considers everything to a more specific degree than anyone I have ever been on the phone with. The way people talk, down to the very words they use every day, are all topics of discussion. MacKaye has been quoted as saying he does not understand the expression "take care" and is always suspicious of words like "forever," "every time," and "always." He says, "I think that language and the way people use language has a really powerful effect on the discourse of life. People use words that cause more trouble than they actually mean. It gets people into trouble, maybe because we don't understand language as well as we'd like to, or maybe because language is incapable of describing emotions and feelings." This is the talk most people encounter in the philosophy, psychology, and linguistics departments of a university, not the standard fare of an interview in a music magazine.

It is no surprise that the leader of a band that was addressing sexual harassment, social injustices, racial iniquities, and corporate greed long before it became fashionable would have a wealth of ideas concerning mainstream governmental policies. Politics came up in our discussion around the end of the second hour. "The morning of 9/11 I was making breakfast with the radio on and I heard that two planes hit the World Trade Center. After the second plane hit I thought, 'Ahhh, I get it. This was intentional.' So, at that point, I just turned the radio off. I did not want to burn in my head for the rest of my life the sound of the reactions those planes crashing into those buildings caused. I knew that this was a serious event of the utmost importance, so I did not want the frenzy of rumors and random guesses about what happened there that would inevitably come out on the television and radio to influence how I reacted to the situation."

While the rest of the nation sat glued to their televisions, MacKaye resigned





himself to keeping occupied and not letting this catastrophe scare him or change his life. Instead, he did what he has done regularly since the late-'70's: he answered fan mail (which he dated September 10th so no one would think he was crazy). "Even when a plane flew into the Pentagon, which is less than a mile from my house, I did not alter my life. If I'm going to die, well, no information I'm going to get from the television or radio is going to prevent that. So I just turned the radio off, and for me it's been off ever since."

MacKaye discusses his childhood in the '60's and early-'70's as a boy in Washington, D.C. who felt sure he would go to war when he turned 18. "The draft was in place, so I just always took it for granted that I would have to fight one day." Nonetheless, he became a fierce voice against war. While many of his fans were finishing junior high during the first Gulf War, MacKaye became a devoted anti-war activist, and remains articulate and thoughtful on the subject.

At a time when many in the punk rock community are becoming more and more politically active, MacKaye's entire iconoclastic career has been a series of focused and directed attacks on right wing and ignorant thought. "During Vietnam there, of course, was a huge anti-war movement in America. I was young, but I thought I would have to fight for the United States one day and I really began to consider what the hell that meant. I do not consider myself an American. In April, 1962 I woke up in America, but I hate the idea of nations and party lines. So since then I've decided to work hard to fight the idea of bloodshed over nationality. It just seems so stupid and thoughtless to me."

Hence, when America began posting flags on every car, front porch, store window, and political rally, MacKaye was sickened and baffled. "Why was that the reaction? I thought that after 9/11 the country would go into a period of reflection or mourning. People here would try to understand what was causing anger in the world towards the U.S. Instead, people started putting up flags on their SUV's as if to rationalize something that couldn't be rationalized and justify an inevitable war."

When I suggest that the Muslim militants who attacked New York may have wished for the destruction of the United States and all that it stands for, my interviewee becomes agitated, "I don't know where you get your news from, but my mother told me when I was growing up that the 'common knowledge' about Japanese people during World War II was that they were animals who were savage and brutal beasts. They weren't people, but they were brutes. Maybe we'll look back in 20 years on the events of the early part of the century and realize how narrow minded and flat-out wrong we were about Muslims. Maybe we'll also realize how much arrogance and hubris we had to think that they were attacking us merely because we're here and because we 'love freedom.' Then, maybe we can understand that this was a handful of people who do not represent popular ideas, but rather just a small sect. We need understanding and we don't have it right." How does one argue with logic like that?

Like MacKaye, many of the people who he has surrounded himself with over the past 25 years are inherently political individuals. Maybe it's because many of the kids involved in D.C.'s punk scene have parents who run the government, but the city has a long, rich history of believing that music is far more than just the notes on a record and rather an engine of social change. Through MacKaye's Dischord Records imprint, which released nearly every note he has ever uttered, a liberal and sometimes soul-searching set of highly creative bands has pushed what punk rock sounds like and what its content is comprised of.

Even though they are on indefinite hiatus, MacKaye and his band Fugazi have remained an essential piece of the American musical landscape. They have cemented what punk rock represents in an increasingly thoughtless and homogenized artform. Furthermore, they have kept constant that idea that punk is a cultural and political movement that extends beyond aesthetics and oftentimes means far more. With their rule of not playing shows that charge no more than six dollars for admission; only playing benefit shows (at which they do not take a payment) within the confines of Washington, D.C., having no manager, no publishing company, no booking agent, or anyone else who might represent the band's interests, they are a model for the Do It Yourself way of life. Sadly, bands like Fugazi and people like MacKaye may be more urgently needed than ever in 2004. ■

LAMB OF GOD

SLAUGHTER OF THE SOUL



“I THINK THAT RATHER THAN BEING LANDSCAPES OF RIFF AFTER RIFF AFTER RIFF WITH SCREAMING OVER IT, THESE ARE SONGS. A LOT OF THESE SONGS YOU COULD REARRANGE OR RE-INTERPRET INTO A DIFFERENT STYLE OF MUSIC AND IT’LL STILL BE A SONG.”

For Lamb Of God guitarist Mark Morton, the last few days at home before heading out for the 2004 Ozzfest are trying moments. The band has been working feverishly, putting the finishing touches on their major-label debut, *Ashes Of The Wake*, which was released this past September. With only a limited amount of time until they have to be out criss-crossing the country, the pressure is riding high.

“It was tough,” he notes of the *Ashes* sessions, “we didn’t really run out of time, as we knew what we were getting into, so we scheduled everything accordingly. It was a brutal session though—13, 14 hour days for six days a week. That’s how you work. If you gotta get it done, you gotta get it done.” Still, as meticulous as the Richmond, VA-based thrash metal act was in planning—and thereby maintaining—Morton admits that working within the decidedly brief writing period wasn’t the easiest task.

“We came off the *Headbanger’s Ball* tour in December 2003,” he recalls, “and that summer we’d been signed to Epic. At the top of this year, we knew we had to start writing a record that we were going to record in May, so we basically had four months to write our major label debut. We’re used to taking a year or two to write a record.” Morton notes that most of the pressure was placed on the initial part of the process, the writing period, and that “by the time we got to the recording end—actually tracking the record we had written—you know, it was better.” So what was Lamb Of God’s big rush to get their Epic debut tracked and delivered? After all, the band had just released *As The Palaces Burn* in May of 2003. It’s not as if they’d opted for some sort of rock and roll sabbatical.

Morton agrees: “I think by all accounts, the touring and the album cycle for *As The Palaces Burn* was abbreviated and that album’s doing really well—it still is a really hot record—even for people right now as we’re talking, that’s a new record for them. I think it boils down to the fact that we’re changing labels and we got on a major and they don’t want us to finish out the cycle on our last record. They want their product. They want their piece of what Lamb Of God is doing.” With metal on the radar of every label head-honcho, and with new albums from Shadows Fall, Killswitch Engage, and Mastodon on the way, this could be Lamb Of God’s opportunity to take their band to the next level. “When we had the good fortune of signing to a label like Epic, that in itself is pretty mind blowing, to think that you could play the kind of music we play and be on a label of that magnitude. We were more than happy to start work on a new record, although it is a shame that we didn’t quite get the chance to work *Palaces* the way we would’ve liked to. We didn’t even tour Europe for *Palaces*, which seems like something we should have done.” Even without completing the necessary touring cycle for an album like *As The Palaces Burn*, the band is on the tip of everybody’s tongue.

With all that in mind, Morton notes that his band has a goal to bring a full-fledged, headlining stage show to theaters this time around. “Strangely enough, that opportunity hasn’t arisen yet. I think that type of thing’s going to wind up happening towards the end of this year and we’re really looking forward to that—in being able to sort of indulge ourselves and give that back to our fans—where we really can put on a show we want to put on.

“We’ve learned a lot from our mentors and people we’ve toured with,” he adds, “but we haven’t yet really had the ability to apply it, or the time or the availability to apply it, so that’s one thing we’re looking forward to. To bring our full-fledged show to people. Hopefully this fall, we’ll be able to do that.”

All apologies aside for the lack of a proper stage show thus far—it’s just not every day that an extreme metal act like Lamb Of God receives an offer from a major label. Typically content with the rap-rock or nü-metal schlock that floods mainstream radio airwaves, major labels rarely take the risk of offering a slot on their roster to an act that’s understood by such a minute segment of the music buying public. However, not only did Epic find a band to enhance their musical spectrum, but Lamb Of God realized that they’d outgrow the resources afforded to them by staying with an indie label.

“We have nothing but amazing things to say about Prosthetic Records [the band’s former home] and they’re a great label,” Morton affirms. “They’re actually a bigger label now and they’re able to handle bigger projects than they were when we were on the label, largely because of the way things worked out with Epic and us leaving. But at the time, there were limits to things like video budgets and the amount of records they could ship initially and those were the kinds of obstacles we were faced with, just because they were a smaller label. Those guys bent over backwards to do everything they could, to help us keep our momentum. So we were entertaining together our options of moving to a bigger home and a place for Lamb Of God and the Epic offer came amazingly fast.” Just how fast? After keeping a close eye on the group, the label approached the band a week after *Palaces*’ release. A couple meetings later and the band had solidified their deal.

So how does Morton think his band compares to the tamer fare that Epic is used to working with?

“Honestly, I don’t pay that much attention to it,” he says. “We just do our own thing. We don’t take any cues from anybody else and there are no other bands we want to be like. We don’t really feel there’s a model to what we’re doing. We just evaluate every situation that works for us and make our own decisions.” As far as competing major labels jumping on the bandwagon to sign extreme metal acts, Morton opines that perhaps his group might be the litmus test the industry is closely examining before making their decision to offer deals to like-minded groups.

“There are probably a lot of people looking to see what our record does on a major to see if they’re going to sign extreme bands,” he says. “But we don’t really concern ourselves with that, we just write records. There’s no strategy, it’s just the five of us that sit down and write a record. It’s all about us.”

Comparing *Ashes* to *Palaces*, Morton finds the two to be considerably different. Whereas *Palaces* felt like “a band that writes heavy metal songs,” Morton claims *Ashes* is more of “a heavy metal band that writes songs.”

He clarifies: “I think that rather than being landscapes of riff after riff after riff with screaming over it, these are *songs*. A lot of these songs you could rearrange or re-interpret into a different style of music and it’ll still be a song. That to me is the big change and there’s a lot more range on this record. It has some of slowest stuff we’ve done and some songs that aren’t particularly hard to play on guitar. These are new approaches for us and there’s certainly some traditional Lamb Of God-style flamethrower thrash metal, but there are a lot of departures on this record.” There is something to be said for good songwriting, be it a guy strumming an acoustic guitar or a thrash outfit like Richmond’s finest. The ability of a song to transcend from one genre to another truly captures the essence of writing a quality song. If cohesion is the goal, Lamb Of God is truly achieving success.

But why has the band had such a diverse appeal when many other metal bands have been unsuccessful in reaching out to other audiences? “That’s a good question, because being where we’re from, Richmond, Virginia, not a lot really happens, it’s not a big spot on anybody’s radar. We’ve always been so homegrown, and maybe that’s it, maybe because we’re so homespun, there are just enough elements with all these types of music that carries over and crosses over to different types of crowds. Perhaps in L.A. or Boston or New York, bands are more specific because there are crowds for each genre, where you can cater specifically to one crowd or another.”

Fortunately, Lamb Of God’s audience hasn’t been exclusively extreme metal heads. Hardcore kids and punks have also embraced the act, much like other metal groups, including Shadows Fall, and long-time cross-genre favorites, Motörhead. “We’re pretty well-versed with those crowds,” says Morton. “Like Atreyu, we’ve toured with them several times before, in England and in the U.S. It’s a movement that we’re actually pretty familiar with. We are fortunate to have been embraced by that crowd, as well as the traditional thrash-metal crowd. We’ve had the good fortune of being able to be diverse like that, across the cliques and genres and plug in anywhere. That’s been good for us.” How many major label acts out there can claim that?

Although *Ashes* may not have the full-throttle, guns blazing attitude from start to finish as *Palaces* did, it doesn’t mean that Lamb Of God are intentionally softening up their jagged edges in order to hit the charts or get to commercial radio. “There are no ballads, no sing-along choruses,” Morton assures. “That’s not what we do.” Still, there was a major change in the production department, particularly since *Ashes* found the band working with producer Machine, who had previously worked with heavy—though not as pummeling—groups like White Zombie and Clutch.

Perhaps regular rotation on MTV’s *TRL* may not be in the cards for Lamb Of God, but Morton has disclosed a few words on what’s to come with “Laid To Rest,” the band’s first video. “It ties into the subject matter of the song,” says Morton on the video’s treatment, “about paranoia and the internal perception of the world around you. Some of the things that seem normal and everyday are also the same types of things that can turn on you. It’s going to be a pretty neat video.”

“We want [*Ashes*] to be its own personality, its own character. I don’t want to make another *As The Palaces Burn*, as proud as I am of that record, and as proud as I am of *New American Gospel* before that. You can stagnate as musicians; you’ll get bored with what you’re doing. Part of the process of doing that, at least this time, was getting a producer from outside of the metal world and Machine’s never really done a heavy metal record, certainly nothing like this.” The more polished sound of *Ashes* shows Machine’s outsider-take on this particular strain of aggressive rock. “Previously we’ve worked with musicians/producers within the world of extreme metal, and he’s not either of those things and that, to us, was his biggest asset. He’d had a fresh set of ears to put on this music and bring ideas that were outside of the box.” The combination of a fresh set of ears behind the boards and a fresh set of tunes for the metal masses to devour may just be the kick in the ass that Lamb Of God is looking to give to the music world. ■



the RISE

the music industry is fucking dead



AUSTIN, TEXAS' THE RISE HAVE LONG BEEN KNOWN FOR THEIR INFORMED OPINIONS AND INTELLECTUAL STANCE—ASPECTS THAT HAVE BEEN LACKING IN THE STALE HARDCORE SCENE AS OF LATE. AFTER A DEBUT RECORD FOR FERRET THAT THREW REFUSED AND APHEX TWIN INTO A BLENDER, THE BAND WAS IMMEDIATELY COURTED BY BOTH MAJOR AND INDIE LABELS. SHORTLY THEREAFTER THEY FELL OFF THE RADAR COMPLETELY.

MEMBERS POPPED UP IN ...TRAIL OF DEAD, JULIETTE AND THE LICKS, AND OTHERS WHILE

FRONTMAN CORY KILDUFF'S ART COULD BE FOUND GRACING THE COVERS OF ALBUMS FROM BOYS NIGHT OUT AND UNEARTH, AS WELL AS ON THE PAGES OF THIS VERY MAGAZINE. AFTER A SERIES OF RECORD DEAL OFFERS THAT WOULD LEAVE THE BAND BROKE AND DESTITUTE AT BEST, THEY DECIDED TO GIVE AWAY THEIR NEXT RECORD FOR FREE THROUGH LAW OF INERTIA. IT'S A BOLD MOVE FOR THE BAND AND A DECISION THAT CAME ONLY AFTER SERIOUS SOUL SEARCHING.

WITH THE MUSIC INDUSTRY IN A CONTINUOUS

NOSEDIVE, AND MAJOR MUSIC CONGLOMERATES ONLY ADDING FUEL TO THE FIRE, THE BAND HOPES TO INTRODUCE A NEW BUSINESS MODEL. IT'S ONE THAT BENEFITS THE ARTISTS THEMSELVES WHILE CUTTING OUT ALL THE MIDDLEMEN AND HANGERS-ON TAKING THEIR 15% OFF THE TOP. IN THE TRADITION OF OUTSPOKEN ARTISTS LIKE DANGERMUSE, CHUCK D, AND THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS, THE RISE WILL CHALLENGE INDUSTRY STANDARDS. CORY KILDUFF TOOK THE TIME TO FLESH OUT THE BAND'S MOTIVES BEHIND THIS EXTRAORDINARY PROJECT.

Why exactly did you guys stop touring?

We felt like labels were sort of holding us hostage to touring and contracts. After we put out the Ferret release and we started meeting with more labels, including major labels, they were asking us to tour anywhere from six to nine months a year or else they wouldn't work with us. For us, this wasn't realistic and it really wasn't fair. At least half of us have fiancés or wives and if we toured nine months a year they would leave us. It's just not worth it. The other part is that they're asking us to sacrifice our normal lives, what would be the pursuit of a normal happiness—a family, a career, things like that. So, in losing all of that stuff, we get a gamble of being able to make a living off of our band. But the people asking us to do this, the people at the labels, they don't really risk anything. They get their salary, they get to keep their jobs, they have a home life, and they get to start a family. If touring doesn't work out for us, if a tour fails and we don't make a lot of money, it doesn't necessarily hurt them. It's basically asking us to gamble everything and give up everything that would constitute normal life while they don't sacrifice anything.

Why do you think other bands haven't jumped on the same idea that you have about this?

Well, there are two reasons. One is the scenario where a band doesn't necessarily want to have that normal life. Our good friends in Recover, they were very young when they started touring. They were like 18 and 19. They didn't really have apartments or homes or anything, so that was what they did. They left their stuff at their parents' houses and they went on tour, so there wasn't as much of a risk in regards to what they had to give up. The other scenario is people can want to make a living in music and want their band to succeed so bad that they're willing to give up anything. They're willing to take any risk.

Isn't that the gamble you have to make if you want your band to succeed? You've got to be dedicated to going out there for nine months and really pushing it, no holds barred.

I think that for some people that is all right. I'm not making this a black and white issue of "you should never tour." The gamble itself doesn't necessarily pay off, and I think what bothered us more was we weren't given the option to make that decision for ourselves. It was "either you tour six to nine months a year or you won't be a band, and we won't sign you, and we won't put out your records." That's just really unfair and it also takes away the ability for the best music to be available to a certain audience, whereas audiences aren't necessarily getting the best music from the best musicians. What they're getting are people with a common denominator of "we like playing music and we also don't mind living the lifestyle of a trucker." There might be somebody in their bedroom or a band that's all got families making incredible music that you will never hear because nobody will put it out. We felt at this point it was time for a different solution. It's time for an alternative to what these labels are dictating as the business model for musicians.

This also takes file sharing out of the equation. How do you recoup on a project like this? It's a major investment to put out a record. How does one not take a major hit if they're not touring and there's no label support and you're basically giving it away for free? On a moral level, music should be free and it should be for everybody and it should get to the most people possible, but on a dollars and cents level it's hard to do that.

Well, it depends on your expectations. If your expectations are to be the size of a Radiohead or a Coldplay or somebody on a major label such as that, this is probably not your option. There





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BUT YOU KNOW WHAT,
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AT FULL PRICE AND
THEY EITHER PAY FOR
THEM OR THEY GET SUED

isn't enough money involved to do that or to have that sort of lifestyle. Our ideal was that we're okay living humbly. We are lower-to-middle-class kids and this is the way we live and we're fine with that. I think mainstream musicians and celebrities in general need to be taken down a peg or two in our society. They don't need to be making that much money and that's one of the reasons people are getting cheated. There's so much money involved that major labels can't risk not doing stuff like that. They can't risk finding a creative solution to marketing versus making that band go out nine months a year and sell themselves, ultimately creating less work for the label. Now, as far as competing and money goes, we recorded our record for somewhere between two and three thousand dollars at the exact same studio where we came in after a major label band had been in there and spent \$10,000. We have the exact same quality record as a major label record and we recorded it cheaper. I think that's where bands would realize it. You could literally play shows in your hometown or do whatever to raise money. I'd say you could probably put out a major label quality record for under five grand. Now, with the advances in home recording, with Pro Tools set-ups and such, bands can even develop recordings themselves. It doesn't really take that long to be able to do it decent enough to be able to release it. I know Scarlet, they recorded their entire new record by themselves. How much money do you think they spent? I mean aside from equipment—stuff like that that they've been building up over the years—the actual recording of the record didn't really cost them anything. So, you don't need the major label as bad as you did or even just the regular label, the indie label. Before, if your band wasn't signed to a label, you didn't have a shot in hell. All that's changed now, the playing field is much more level.

I know that Scarlet is an exception. It almost seems like indie labels and major labels are getting closer together and one's not taking a risk. Do you think they're taking less of a gamble and they're trying to be safe instead of trying to be innovative and trying to give the artists a little more freedom?



Because hardcore over the last year or so has been getting so much more attention in the mainstream, a lot of indie labels have, in my opinion, bitten off more than they can chew. I think they've shot themselves in the foot. Ferret's distribution is through a major label. It's through RED Distribution, which is owned by Sony. Now, their deal isn't just, "Hey, Ferret puts out records and we distribute them." Their deal is very specific. They have to press a minimum number of records. And then they have to spend a minimum amount of money on advertising. Now, the minimum number of records, let's say it's 10,000 that they have to press, or else Sony won't distribute it. So, if they sign a new band that nobody's ever heard of from a town, they can't really afford to do that as much. It's not as if that band is going to come out the gates running and sell 10,000 records and make up for \$25,000 worth of advertising in the first few months. So, whereas before, going through a distributor like Lumberjack, something a little smaller, they could afford to press two, three thousand records, and start letting this band develop. They can't do that anymore. This is across the board on a lot of indie labels, that they sort of don't have the ability to be as risky as they did before and bring people newer bands. They have to think to themselves, "Is this band going to sell? Can I possibly get this band on MTV, even if it's *Headhanger's Ball*? Can I do that? I've gotta get more attention."

Do you think that the label structure of both indies and majors will change and the power will shift? This is kind of a landmark project. I know Chuck D from Public Enemy, who has a huge following, releases a lot of his stuff over the internet and bypasses the label route entirely. Do you think that's an avenue that bands are going to start taking more often?

Absolutely. I think the internet is one of the main driving forces behind leveling the playing field. You're going to see a lot more being taken out of the record by the time it gets to stores. It's getting stretched so thin that places like the iTunes music store are where records are going to be bought. Here in Austin, TX we've had four record stores close this year, and that includes small punk stores as well as Tower Records. They've all closed because they can't make money. And major labels are still suing twelve 12 year-olds and other people for downloading music and they understand that there's a really big problem [for them] with file sharing, or at least *they* consider it a problem. They're not doing anything about it. You still go into stores and records are \$18.95. It's like they're not even trying. They're just saying there's this obvious problem that we're losing profits, but you know what, we're not even going to try to meet people halfway. We're going to keep our records at full price and they either pay for them or they get sued. It's just not realistic. Everything's changed. I think eventually labels are going to have a much smaller role in things. ■





From Cards

How Far Can \$100 Take You in

By Ryan Shunkel

I don't really have what Miriam Webster would define as a "career." My bank account has all the stability of a floating crap game, and nine times out of 10, when I check my balance floating crap is pretty much what I find. While living in San Francisco I actually supported myself through gambling alone, but then I had one *really* bad day at the office and was forced to pack up and move as far away from my landlord as possible. My car died in L.A., which is where pretty much everyone without a plan ends up.

Recently I had been thinking about the good old days when I used to earn my sandwich money from the comfort of a card table, so I decided to see what Los Angeles had to offer. While in the Bay Area, Lake Tahoe was my primary gambling destination, and after a little investigating in my new home, I was stoked to find that South Central is riddled with ghetto casinos. "Fuck yeah!" I thought to myself upon discovering this. "The hood will be so much dooper to kick it in than Tahoe." Finally, my chance to keep it real had arrived.

I took the last hundred bucks out of my savings and set out to start my life anew. By the time I found myself sitting in a Mexican warehouse having dropped the last of the cash on a rooster who was literally getting ripped to shreds on the losing end of a vicious cockfight, I realized that no good idea ever starts by emptying your bank account and driving into South Central.

The first spot I tried to hit up was a place near my house called the Ban Thai Card House. It's in Thai Town, nowhere near the hood, but I figured a warm up game or two would help before rolling into the ganglands. I'd never really been in to Crip/Blood territory before and wanted to make sure I was loose as The Juice by the time I dropped my greenbacks on their tables.

Unfortunately, Ban Thai isn't even a card house anymore, just some run down old massage parlor. I double checked the address and poked my head in, hoping the "massage parlor" sign was just a front. I asked the lady behind the counter if there were any card tables in the back. There weren't. I looked around. The place smelled like burnt milk. I felt tense. A massage would've hit the spot.

"You have like, a 'Gentleman's Special'?" I asked.

She looked at me confused.

"Happy ending?" I inquired.

This question resulted in an impromptu staring contest and I was forced to bail. My trip was off to a pretty shitty start, but fuck that noise anyway; if I'd ended up getting a hand job, I would've just gone home and taken a nap anyway. Besides, I was trying to get my life back on track and not begin yet another relationship that was bound never to go beyond manual stimulation. So I got

The lady didn't even respond, but instead took out a bag of carrots from her fanny pack and began gnawing at them with what was left of her four teeth. I looked around and suddenly felt really out of place. Not out of place like "I don't belong here," but out of place like "I'm in a place that shouldn't exist." The bag lady continued gumming her carrots and I left half my beer behind as I casually slipped out the door, \$20 in the hole.

At this point, I had yet to find my spot and felt kind of like Stella *before* she got her groove back. If this next casino was a bust, I was gonna have to go with plan B with the rest of my cash.

The next stop on what was now becoming a full-blown tour was The Commerce Casino in the City of Commerce. I don't know if it's called the City of Commerce as some kind of joke, or if the town leaders really consider the resale of stolen hubcaps to be a legitimate form of commerce, but everything about this place, including its casino, was instantly discouraging.

Like The Bicycle Casino, it was packed with tons of dudes who've obviously been watching way too many *Celebrity Poker* games on Bravo and I found myself signing up for a list to get a seat at a table. Fucking posers, man. I ordered myself a watermelon martini and scoped out the cocktail waitresses, who instead of serving cocktails to the *faux* wangsters as they gambled away their Hypnotiq money, carried around large portions of curry fried rice. Finally, they called my name.

"Homer J, table seat!"

I was escorted to the table as if I were royalty. I felt like P. Diddy.

Unfortunately, a number of things all happened at once. First off, this place was bright as fuck, giving the table the atmosphere of an interrogation room. Secondly, I would've given my grandpa a rim job for a little elbow space. Thirdly, everyone around me was eating huge, disgusting plates of curry fried rice. Lastly, I was getting shit cards, and since we were all playing against each other, there was nothing but bad vibes being thrown at the winners anyway. Bad vibes and a heavy waft of curry breath.

I finally got fed up with this whole scene and wanted to move on. But the prospect of heading to yet another disappointing casino seemed beyond unexciting.

"What would Stella do?" I thought.

So I looked at the dude sitting next to me, who I'm convinced was Biggie Smalls'

Asian Down's Syndromed half-brother and tried to get the 411 on where the real action was.

"Hey dude, you have any idea where there's any real action around here, you know, like cockfights?" I asked.

"What?"

"Cockfights. I was thinking of hitting one up, but none of the casinos I go to seem to have any."

The guy looked at me like / was the one with Down's Syndrome.

"You for real? Where you from?" he asked.

"Compton."

I was getting heavy into character. I had to let this guy know I was cool. While this was all happening, I was holding up the game and the dealer asked me to ante up if I wanted to play. Then some other dude called me a clown as he stuffed a forkful of rice into his mouth.

This time, I was dealt a five/six suited, and as I contemplated whether to stay in. I had one hand on my cards and the other buried deep

in my hair. Everyone was getting impatient and the dealer shot a couple of eye daggers my way.

"Can you please not touch your hair?" she barked.

"Excuse me?" I said.

She repeated that she didn't want me to touch my hair and the table violently erupted with people telling me to place a bet or get the fuck out. I'd already decided I was gonna split, so I asked why I couldn't touch my hair. Biggie told me some people mark cards that way, and I said something to the effect of, "Me mark cards!? Hasn't anyone noticed they're all shit drenched in curry sauce!?" I was then asked to leave the table. It had taken me all of 30 minutes to go from P. Diddy to P. Thetic.

After getting 86'd from the Commerce Casino, I was less than enthused to continue the tour. It was glaringly obvious that my plan to once again become a "professional gambler" was going to be hampered every step of the way by bag ladies, ethnic variations of murdered rap stars, and guys who think they're the only ones paying attention to the *World Series of Poker*. Besides, I wasn't just looking for a way to kill an afternoon, or turn my 100 bucks into rent money; I was looking to regain an entire lifestyle. All told by this point, I was down about 70 bucks and the ghetto casinos didn't seem to be treating me too kindly. So I headed home, dropped off my sweet Miata and caught a bus downtown.

Cards (and casinos in general) were obviously played out, and I figured maybe I could find some real action downtown. You know, a three card Monte game, some guys playing dominoes in Pershing Square, a fucked up cockroach race I could lay odds on down on Skid Row.

I don't know if you've ever been to downtown L.A., but next to Kabul and the 8 Mile parts of Detroit, it's probably the gnarliest place on earth. It's nothing but hundreds of junk shops, blocks of abandoned buildings as far as the eye can see, and a bunch of homeless people with nothing to do besides wander the streets. Needless to say, I was optimistic. I mean, this is where I belonged. The problem was that no one seemed to be gambling anywhere. Finally, after wandering around for about 40 minutes, I bought a pair of dice from a vendor and about 10 minutes passed before some guy asked me if I had any change. He was wearing an eye patch, had like, maybe half his nose left, and his only friend was another bum in a T-Shirt that read "I Hate The Internet."

"I'll give you five bucks," I told him, "but you gotta give me a chance to win it back at a game of dice."

The dude didn't even question this or act confused or anything.

So I gave him five ones and I took out my dice. I figured maybe if some of the rejects from *Night of The Living Dead* wandering by saw us playing, they'd want to join in. My plan immediately went south.

He asked me what I shot and I said, "Um, just like, craps I guess."

"Aight," he responded. His breath smelled like pickled urine.

So he put down a dollar and I put down another of my dollars and I handed him the dice. He rolled something lame, like, a four or a five, and then rolled a few more times until he rolled a seven and then he grabbed the money.

"No, wait," I said, "you crapped out."

"Nah," he said, "Seven!"

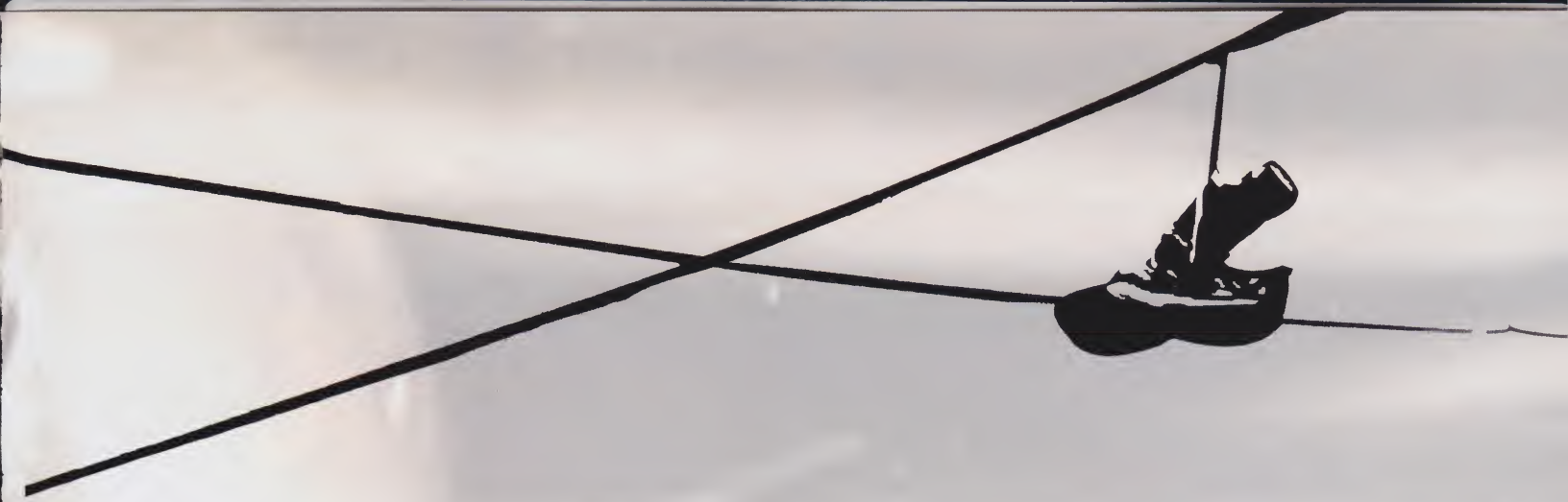
"Yeah, but you had to roll your point."

His one eye stared at me blankly. I tried to focus on anything but his nose, but my will power succumbed. What the fuck had happened to it? What was I doing? Seriously, why was I here? I wanted to end the game but couldn't.

"If you roll a seven or eleven your first time, you win," I told him. "Otherwise, you gotta roll the same number twice *before* throwing a seven or eleven."

This guy pretended to have no idea what I was talking about and just kept shaking his head and telling me I was wrong. Then, he started babbling about how they used to play "back home" and I was totally over it. I mean, this guy obviously never had a home. I was about to ask him if he knew where there were any cockfights in the area, but if dude had any info on a local rooster, I'm sure he would've eaten it. I quickly told him he could





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keep the five dollars and the dollar he "won" as I took off.

At this point, I was ready to scratch my plan all together. But after a short stroll down Skid Row, I thought about how I couldn't end up like one of these guys. No jobs. No future. No pants. I had a dream, dude: to once again become a pro-gambler. It was looking like I couldn't make that dream happen here at home, but if there's one thing I learned from *The Wizard of Oz* it's that no one ever finds happiness in their own backyard! So fuck it, man. I'm going to Mexico to bet on cockfights. Granted, Mexico seemed like a bit of a drive, but then I thought about how I used to drive from San Francisco to Lake Tahoe on a regular basis, and I was like, "Dude, I thought the plan was to keep it real?"

I had no idea where the local Mexican cockfights were being held, but luckily my friend Andy was rolling into town from San Diego that weekend and he was bringing along his newest girlfriend, who was some chick I'd never met, but she lived in Tijuana right between a dog track and a cookie factory. So I called him up and asked him if his girlfriend knew where there were any cockfights taking place in TJ and he put me on the phone with her. My very first conversation ever with this person went something like, "Hey, what's up? Yeah, I'm a friend of Andy's. I guess you guys are rolling down this weekend, yeah? Sweet. So, hey, you happen to know of any cockfights in your neighborhood anytime soon?"

24 hours later, she delivered me a piece of binder paper with a hand drawn map on it that she'd gotten from some dude at a feed store. Her only words of advice were "Don't bring a camera." I was pretty pumped. This was basically a map to my new life. After I learned the route by heart, I was gonna take down my high school diploma and frame this motherfucker instead.

I've been to Mexico many times before, so the place was pretty easy to find. I followed the map and pulled up to this dusty warehouse where a bunch of hombres were gathered around. A few eyes turned my way as I approached, and I noticed a pile of discarded rooster carcasses sitting in a cardboard box over by a tree. They definitely hadn't died of natural causes. I don't speak a whole lot of Spanish, but at this point, I was scared shitless and had to pretend like I knew what I was doing.

"Pelea de gallos?" I asked. That meant "Cockfights?"

I don't know how to say, "Who's this dumb-shit?" in Spanish, but I'm assuming that's what was said to me as I was pointed toward the warehouse. Every fiber of my soul was telling me to get the fuck out of there, but I went in anyway.

I have no idea if this get-together was illegal or not, but it sure was well organized. There were all these guys with their roosters hanging around and a couple of fights had obviously

already taken place by the time I got there.

The two guys whose fight was next had their roosters on display. One rooster had a red tag on it's leg and the other had a blue tag, and they were showing them to all the guys who were gonna lay down bets (myself included). Some dudes were asking questions and checking out their wing span and looking at the razor knives that were going to be put on the roosters' feet. I just started getting a weird feeling in the pit of my stomach. I'm not sure what I was expecting on my drive into Mexico, but I was about to witness a nightmare.

Afterwards some guy asked me something and all I could say was, "Si, no se," which means, "Yeah, I don't know." This evening could have easily ended with me just disappearing from the face of the earth, and the only people who'd have a clue as to what happened would be my friend Andy and his tripped out girlfriend. They would've had to explain to everyone that the last they heard, I was following some shitty map into Mexico to find a cockfight.

Anyway, everyone went back to their seats which were just these crummy folding chairs around the pen and this lady cruised around and asked everyone, "Rojo o azul," which meant "Red or blue" and I was just like, "Rojo" and I handed her a 20 dollar bill, the last of my cash. Then she handed me a stub and a few minutes later, the chicken version of Thunder Dome began.

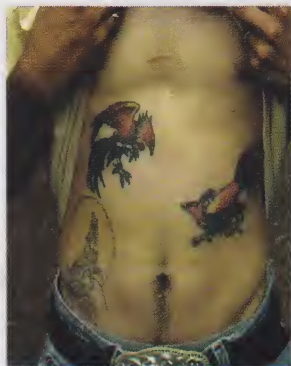
The fight lasted about 10 minutes and Rojo was getting his pollo ass kicked. He was taking mad

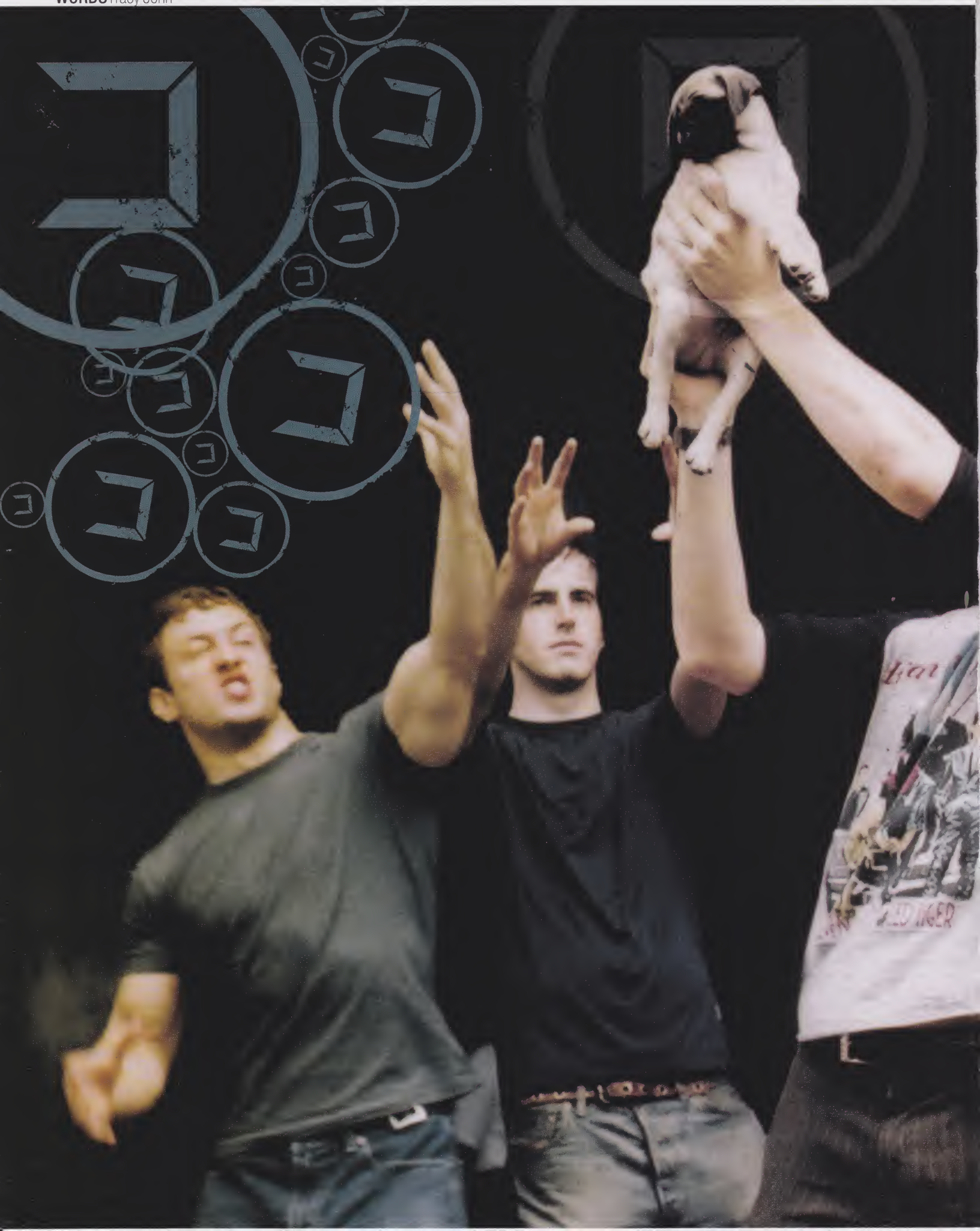
body shots and never really got in the game. Honestly, you'd think he'd ape-raped Azul's mother the way old blue was slicing him up, and the place was going balls crazy with people cheering the match on. Rojo's owner kept yelling shit at him, but I doubt he understood what was being said any better than I did.

Tragically my red rooster lost and while he didn't get killed, unless they choppered him out to Cedars-Sinai Medical Center immediately after the bout, he was definitely fit for the fryer by the time it was called. Poor dude never had a chance and he no doubt ended up in the cardboard Auschwitz beside the tree outside.

So I lost my 20 bucks, which was now the complete hundred and things looked like they were getting ready for another fight, but I just needed to go home. I felt sort of like Martin Sheen after he butchered Brando at the end of *Apocalypse Now*. But in reality, I was just an idiot who'd spent his last 20 dollars on a cockfight.

All in all, I'm not sure where this whole adventure has left me. More lost than ever, I suppose. I heard they have stallion battles up in Montana though, and my rent is due next week, so I may just pack up and split. Or I might try and do something with my Masters Degree in Business Administration, but I'm sort of leaning toward checking out those stallion battles. ■





THE DILLINGER ESCAPE PLAN

NO SLEEP 'TIL NEW BRUNSWICK

"For my final project in school, I made a plaque with a double-sided dildo on it. It was a lesbian wedding gift and it said 'Viva La Vulva' on a little brass plate," laughs Liam Wilson, bassist for the Dillinger Escape Plan. Had the band not achieved underground success for their genre-shattering fusion of metal, hardcore, jazz, and electronic soundscapes, Wilson could've been making lesbian sex toys and working a job in what he was formally trained to do: woodworking.





"I'd play in local bands and I took some music theory classes and stuff, but it was never really anything I applied until I joined Dillinger," Wilson explains. "Before that, I was just all about woodworking," he says, half-jokingly.

Fortunately for us, the whole Dillinger Escape Plan thing panned out. When the northern New Jersey collective formed in 1997, no one—including the members themselves—anticipated they would become one of the most respected bands in underground metal and hardcore. In fact, Dillinger has been name-checked by both hardcore scene snobs and mainstream metal acts alike, even touring with prog-metal practitioners System Of A Down. "We've always had this perverse interest just to see how far it would go," Wilson snickers, "because right from the start we were like, 'Listen to this. How the fuck are we selling records?'"

Ben Weinman—founding member, co-guitarist, and Dillinger's chief spokesman—nods in agreement. "Bands like Snapcase or Earth Crisis were the biggest bands in the world to us because they'd have like 400 kids freakin' out at their shows. When we started, we wanted to be popular within a genre or a scene, but we gave up on that because it just wasn't going to happen." Now seven years since their inception, Dillinger's cultish fan base is larger than that of both Snapcase and Earth Crisis combined, and still growing strong. "We just did it for the music," he shrugs, "so we said, 'Fuck it—let's see what happens.'"

What happened were 1998's highly praised *Under The Running Board* EP and their groundbreaking debut album, 1999's *Calculating Infinity*, which is as easy to wrap your head around as an extra credit question on a college-level calculus exam. The complexity of *Calculating Infinity*—with its oddball time signatures, jazz-infused grooves, stop-start rhythms, and larynx-shredding vocals—was so innovative that a new term was coined to describe Dillinger's brand of astonishingly technical music: the "m-word."

"When we're called 'math-core' or 'math-metal,' it's more the 'core' or the 'metal' part of those phrases that gives me a gag reflex," Wilson scoffs. "I think the 'mathy' part is one of the many adjectives that work because there is a certain logic and a certain architecture that we play around with, but we didn't call ourselves that."

While "mathy" might be one of the right words to describe Dillinger's sound, the band became even more difficult to classify when they teamed up with the king of undefinable music, Mike Patton. After the amicable departure of singer Dimitri Minakakis in 2001, the remaining members agreed to record 2002's *Irony Is A Dead*

Scene EP with Patton, who had befriended them during their tour with Mr. Bungle. What resulted was a four-song skullfuck of moody, off-kilter dissonance and, of course, Patton's schizophrenic barks, howls, and croons. While the EP was critically-acclaimed, Dillinger fanatics still wondered when the hell they would get another full length album.

Five years after *Calculating Infinity* and a few line-up changes later (Weinman and drummer Chris Pennie are the only original members); the group was ready to record their sophomore effort. Over time, Dillinger found stability in Wilson, guitarist Brian Benoit, and their newest addition, a fire-breathing (pre-Great White) and feces-flinging (only once at U.K.'s Reading Festival in 2002, as an "artistic statement" Weinman insists) frontman named Greg Puciato.

After an extensive online search, Puciato was chosen in October 2002 among hundreds of other potential hopefuls for his impeccable rendition of "43% Burnt." Aside from clicking with the band musically, Puciato also fit in with Dillinger's mindset from the get-go. He had been in the band for a mere two weeks when the group decided to introduce their new singer to the world at the CMJ Music Marathon in New York City. "We were like, 'Let's throw him in the fire and see what happens,'" recalls Weinman. "He was so nervous, I honestly didn't know if he was going to get on stage or not. Then on the first song he just runs up there and takes a monitor and throws it into the crowd. People are trying to take pictures of him and he's grabbing their cameras and throwing them," he laughs.

"He had two choices," the smirking guitarist continues. "Either totally wuss out or just push it and not give a fuck. So he gets the same feeling that we all get, that constant pressure."

The pressure that Weinman refers to is a unique one. Most bands don't have to deal with such a maniacal anticipation from their fans, peers, and critics after having only one album. "One full length and everyone has ideas of what we should be like and what we should sound like," he says. "The challenge was to not let that pressure affect how we wrote the record. But we'd be lying if we said that we didn't care all the time about what people say," Wilson quickly adds. "The idea is that we could not let it affect how we wrote our music. We're already our own harshest critics, so nobody's going to be harder on us than we are. All the ideas and expectations other people have are tiny compared to the things that we would like to do."

Miss Machine proves to be Dillinger's most ambitious undertaking yet. The band spent more than two years writing and recording the album "pirate-style" while touring constantly. "A big part of this record was just being on the road with laptops," Weinman elaborates. "When we were mixing our record, it was literally me, Chris, and our producer [Steve Evetts] on laptops. We didn't have a big budget for two or three months in the studio, and since Greg lives in Baltimore, Liam lives in Philadelphia, and the rest of us live in New Jersey, we just had to instant message songs back and forth."

But it wasn't only the endless recording process and the revolving door of band members that delayed the release of *Miss Machine*. Though having new members "definitely retards the creative process," Weinman says, the band also wanted to tour in support of the *Irony* EP, even *sans* Patton. Besides, listeners still needed time to digest what Dillinger were all about. "People are still catching up to *Calculating Infinity*," reasons Wilson, "and I think that we felt we could still get some mileage out of it."

"I still hear people say, 'I've just heard you for the first time,'" Weinman insists. "It happens constantly. Not everybody has a cool older brother or sister that can introduce them to cool music," he says with a smile.

Even if line-up changes, touring, proximity and financial hardship weren't obstacles, the band still would've taken their time to craft *Miss Machine* because

they're such pathological perfectionists. "Instead of just running right through everything, we would just take more time with the songs, and add to them and do whatever we had to do to make them awesome," Pennie quietly offers. "That's kind of how we've always recorded. We did that with *Calculating* and we also did that with the *Irony* EP. I think through that process it's worked for us."

Indeed, their attention to detail has paid off, making *Miss Machine* worth the wait. Those who were looking forward to a carbon copy of *Calculating Infinity* should have known better than to expect Dillinger to do something twice. *Miss Machine* adeptly changes tempo and mood, incorporating actual melody (gasp!) and electronic ambience amidst Weinman and Benoit's manic guitar freak-outs, Wilson's feral basslines, and Pennie's decimating drum beats. As evidenced in the crushing opener "Panasonic Youth," the electronic industrial-tinged "Phone Home," and the oddly danceable and harmonic "Unretrofied," *Miss Machine* demonstrates the progressive thinking that was present on *Calculating* without musically regurgitating it. "We've been listening to heavy music for so long, we really just tried to take it to different extremes because we're sick of everything else," says Weinman. "We just made sure that we wrote music that we liked and music that stimulated us and excited us. What we found exciting when we first got into heavy music just wasn't exciting anymore. How many times can you listen to double-bass for a whole song?"

While Dillinger aim to push the musical envelope, some don't understand that the

"OTHERS WERE LIKE, 'WE DON'T GET IT AND WE DON'T LIKE IT, BUT YOU'RE DOING SOMETHING RIGHT BECAUSE YOU'RE PACKING CLUBS THAT I COULDN'T PACK WITH MY ARTIST THAT I SPENT TWO MILLION DOLLARS ON,'"

band isn't trying to be weird just for the sake of being weird. The band has been so accustomed to their own way of writing songs that trying to be "weird" wasn't even a factor. "I think on this record in particular, we got so used to trying to make things weird and mess things up, that it all became so normal to us," declares Weinman. "We've been playing and writing these types of songs for so many years, that nothing seems weird to us anymore. We were in this situation with the new record where we didn't have to go into a certain area and we didn't have to make these crazy riffs. We didn't even think about that. We don't think of anything as weird or normal anymore, we just try to make an awesome song."

"Maybe this riff isn't weird," Wilson chaffs, "or maybe it's just as normal as the weird ones. It's not like when we were writing songs, we'd stop and go, 'Okay guys, that's not mathy enough for Dillinger so we can't use it' or 'Gotta make that sound more mathy!'"

Regardless of what's "weird" or "normal" or "mathy enough," when Dillinger were trying to create awesome songs, it certainly helped to have Puciato on board. From clean to scream, his style admirably mirrors Patton in his uncanny ability to manipulate his vocal cords. While Puciato is clearly capable of the full-on vocal brutality that Minakakis unleashed, he also displays a melodic aptitude that wasn't there before. "Greg has such a wide vocal range," Weinman explains. "He definitely influenced our writing a little bit because we were able to do things that we probably couldn't have done in the past."

Despite *Miss Machine* being the most uncompromising and diverse effort Dillinger has made, the album may turn off some listeners, particularly diehard fans of their previous work. "Our sound could be considered more marketable and easier to digest," Weinman admits, "but I would like to think that people like us because our progression seems natural. That it's an unforced and logical expression of what we want to do musically and what we want to get off our chests. We've just taken what we've done in the past and expanded on it."

"It shouldn't surprise anybody because our music is just naturally evolving," says Wilson. "The way I see it, on *Running Board* there were these little bouts of jazzy breaks, and then on *Calculating* it was slightly more flushed out. On the *Irony* EP it became a full section, and now on the new record, it's like a whole song. These things just grow like tumors."

If it isn't their musical evolution that draws the band critics, it's their rising popularity. With major labels signing indie bands left and right, an underground

luminary like Dillinger was bound to be noticed. "We've had major label offers," concedes Weinman. "Most of the people that approached us were like, 'Keep doing your thing and we'll just help you do it better.' Others were like, 'We don't get it and we don't like it, but you're doing something right because you're packing clubs that I couldn't pack with my artist that I spent two million dollars on,'" he grins. "But at the end of the day, somebody at the top with a tie is always going to be like, 'Where's the single?' Freedom is definitely a valid concern."

While the band enjoys the autonomy they have being on a small label like Relapse, they confess that it'd be nice to be able to have all the benefits that a major label could offer. Dillinger are in the awkward adolescent phase, where a band is too big for a small label and not exactly lucrative enough for a big one. "In a situation where we have expectations of big bands, and we want to come off and express ourselves like big bands are able to, but we don't have big budgets," Weinman explains. "Because we're not on a major label, we're not getting tons of money and promotion put into us. It's really just constant grassroots promotion, touring, and taking advantage of every opportunity possible...and more touring."

As many bands learn the hard way, indie labels are not without their own setbacks. "We've had problems with label negotiation stuff too," Wilson acknowledges. "We wanted to make sure that Relapse was prepared to do everything that we wanted for this record. Relapse is an indie label that definitely has their punk politics in order, maybe a little bit too tight at times, but I think they've sort of stepped up to the plate a lot more with this record, especially after we talked to them and explicitly discussed what we expected of them."

"You're not going to get paid from record sales anyway unless you're Eminem or something," Weinman contends. "You just don't make money off of records. You make money off of touring. Our goal is to become a bigger touring band so we can become successful enough to live off of our art. The record's just an advertisement for your live show. Touring is how a band survives in the financial sense."

For a lot of bands breaking out of the smaller scenes, financial survival and trying to make a career out of music are often associated with being a "sellout." For Dillinger, that's definitely not the case. "We're not trying to be the biggest hardcore band ever, but we don't have any aversion to being big either," Wilson exclaims. "We love playing music and we'd love to see our band explode, but I don't think we'd sacrifice any of our ethics in the process, so if it works out, then sure. But if you think

that we're sacrificing our ethics, then maybe you didn't understand our ethics in the first place."

With no particular loathing for popular success, Dillinger made their first official music video for "Panasonic Youth." "Every single band and their mom's got a video right now," Weinman jokes. "A lot of bands are getting played on MTV and *Headbanger's Ball* or Fuse. There are a lot of avenues for heavy music nowadays, which is awesome." In fact, Dillinger were supposed to host MTV2's *Headbanger's Ball* after this interview, but they were bumped off for some other little known band called Judas Priest. With the video scheduled to air anyway and their hosting duties postponed to another date, the band didn't really mind. "It's a new thing for us—the video thing," Weinman chuckles. "When we did it, we had all these ideas, but then we realized we just have to do what we do best. Let's just play."

As many Dillinger fans know firsthand, seeing the band play live is certainly an electrifying (and sometimes daunting) experience. "We're pretty passive people in general, so we use this band as an opportunity to vent, have fun, and freak people out," Weinman says of the band's destructive and frequently injury-causing onstage antics. "Actually, for me personally, I always feel nervous when we play," he professes. "Like I have this feeling where it's us against the world kind of thing. Even if there are a thousand kids who come to see us, there's always a few who are just there to see us fuck up. But once I get onstage, those negative vibes turn into positive energy."

Without a doubt, that positive energy transforms into physical energy. "When I play, some things require a little bit of finesse and concentration," Wilson says of when he performs. "Other things just sound and feel better when everybody's cathartic and I feel the wind off Ben's headstock grazing my forehead."

Weinman agrees. "The music should translate live and that allows us to do what we do, like have a stage light ram you in the head," he says, pointing to a gnarly gash on his brow. Although it makes for a good show, the violent intensity the band displays onstage comes naturally from the songwriting process. "When we write

songs, we definitely ask ourselves how it's going to come off live," Wilson maintains. "That's always a concern, because it gets recorded once and then you have to play it indefinitely for the rest of your career, so it better be good live."

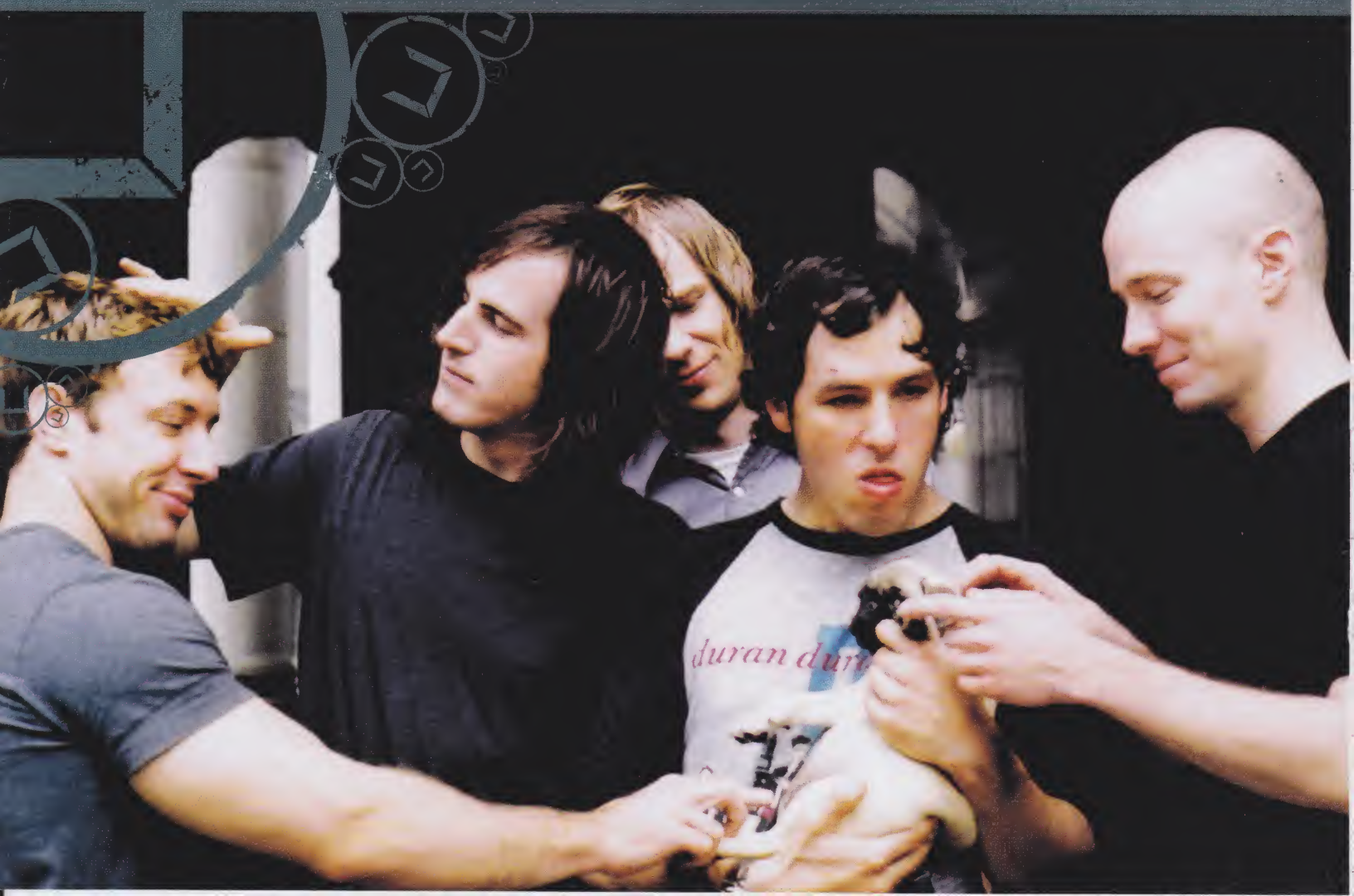
Whether it's in their live shows or recorded music, Dillinger strive to be a band that's constantly thinking outside the box. "Obviously on the new record, you can hear our musical influences easier than in the past, but sometimes it's hard to figure out what music influences directly," Weinman informs. "But we can definitely tell you what artists influence how we think. I think certain artists influence us more attitude-wise more than they do musically, like Aphex Twin, Nine Inch Nails, Mike Patton, etc.

"Bands like Faith No More were in this constant process," Wilson interjects. "There was never a point where you were like that's the 'Faith No More sound.' It was like every song—from 'Jizzlobber' to 'RV' to 'Midlife Crisis'—was completely different, but they were all great. You love certain bands for that because you don't know what you're going to get."

"Everybody saw what happened with Metallica," the long-haired bassist continues. "They tried to inch their way, but they kind of went over the deep end and everybody was like 'Fuck this man,'" he laughs.

With no expectation to become the next Metallica or be pigeonholed in a certain style, the Dillinger guys decided it's now or never, as far as experimenting with their sound. "This is our second record, so we have to do it now or we'll never be able to," Weinman stresses. "We want to be the type of band where people always expect the unexpected and where we're always known to try new things." Even if trying new things means pissing off old fans and creating music that's nearly impossible to categorize. Even if it means being called "math-core."

"We're all pretty happy that people come up with their own ways of describing our music," Weinman submits. "We don't really care what it is, as long as it's not easy to describe. The day it becomes very easy to define, I think we're doing something wrong." ■



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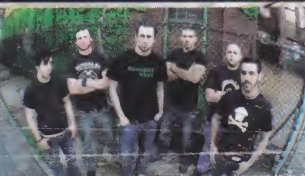
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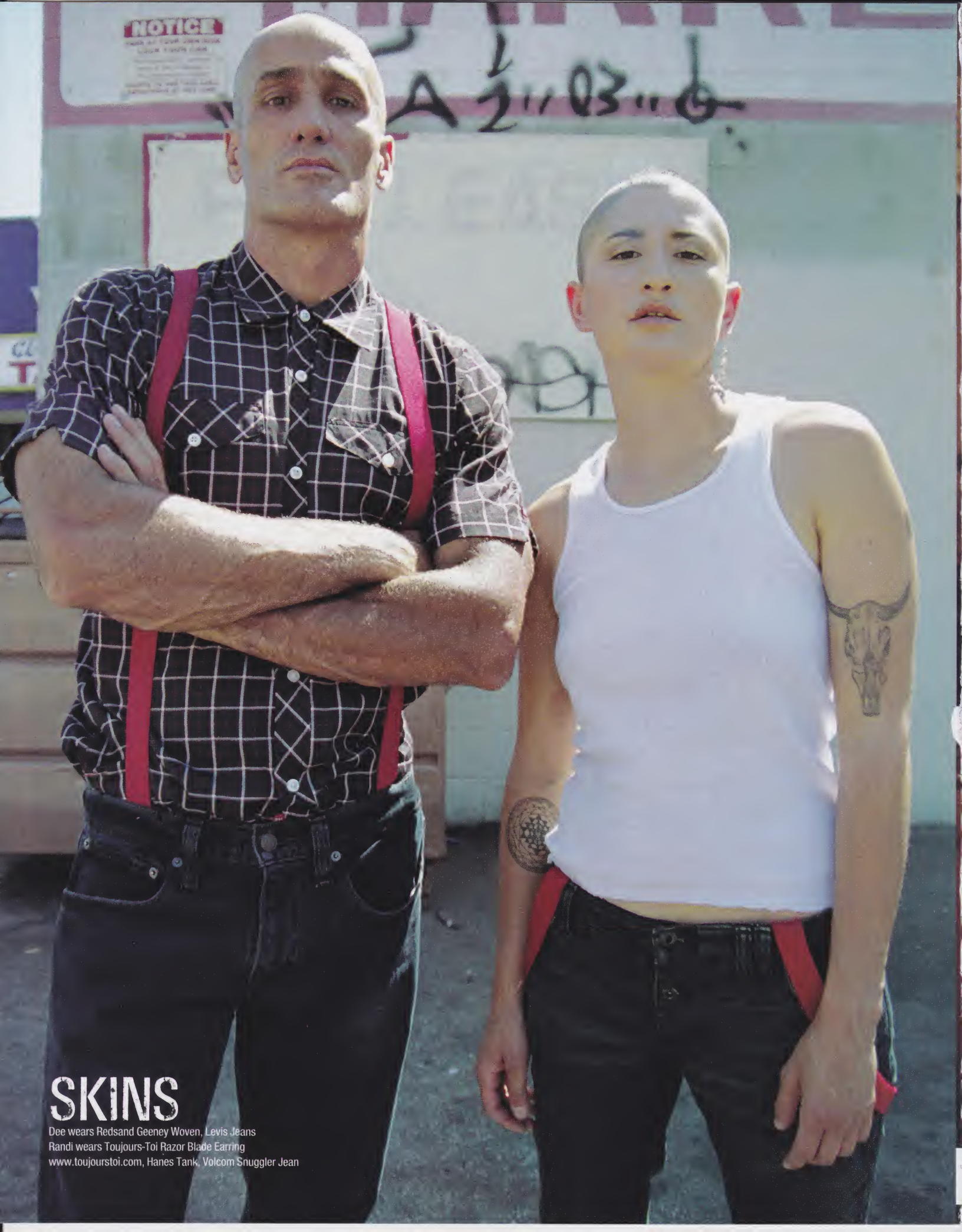
MAKE UP ASSISTANT: Lufine Galadjian

MODELS:

GLICK: Matt, Hillary, Dee, Peter, and Cassie

PHOTOGENICS: Justin, Lindsey, and Sean

DRAGON: Randi



SKINS

Dee wears Redsand Geaney Woven, Levis Jeans

Randi wears Toujours-Toi Razor Blade Earring

www.toujourstoi.com, Hanes Tank, Volcom Snuggler Jean

A full-page photograph of a young man with dark hair and a serious expression, looking slightly upwards and to the left. He is wearing a white short-sleeved polo shirt with a thin red and yellow grid pattern. He is standing in a kitchen with wooden cabinets and a floral wallpaper. He is holding a small glass of milk in his right hand and has his left hand on the handle of a refrigerator. The refrigerator is a light yellow color. The overall lighting is warm and slightly dim, creating a moody atmosphere.

MOD

Seem wears Fred Perry Argyle Polo,
Dickies Girl Worker Pants



NEW WAVE PUNK

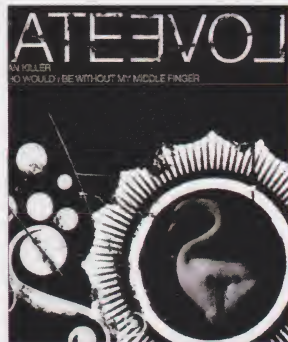
Peter wears Volcom Girls Strummer Tee, Body punks Studded
Bracelets and Belt www.bodypunks.com, Levis Leather Pants



HIPSTER PUNK

Cassie wears Volcom Sophia Rose Tee, Emerica
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#10 MR. POTATO HEAD

ALSO KNOWN AS: The Hairy Spud

FASHIONABLE IN: Sandboxes

SEE ALSO: Mario, Yosemite Sam, and The Swedish Chef

The removable mustache has secretly held the Gillette Corporation hostage for generations. If word ever got out about how Mr. Potato Head keeps his skin so starchy smooth, we'd instantly abandon the Mach 3 for a tiny hole in our upper lip. Although the suggested age is two through 12, Mr. Potato Head continues to be the envy of every white collared man on the face of the planet. The corporate male inevitably contemplates his showdown with death and taxes, but he often overlooks the absolute assurance he will awake every morning with a one sixteenth of an inch layer of facial hair that could scrape the scum off a barbeque. On the other hand, a smooth Mr. Potato rolls over to kiss the mustache-less Mrs. Head in the morning. He discreetly snaps on his facial hair and happily faces the world, quietly snickering and sneering at our recurring razor burn and expensive aftershave.

Adam Lindenbaum



Photos courtesy of www.worldbeardchampionships.com

#9 THE WORLD MUSTACHE CHAMPIONS

ALSO KNOWN AS: Mustache royalty

FASHIONABLE IN: Germany, Norway, Sweden, Nevada

SEE ALSO: Your wildest mustache dreams

The Summer Olympics have come and gone and it's safe to say no one really gave a shit. The competition we should care about is the World Mustache Championships. Held every two years, the host cities include mustache hotbeds such as Höfen, Pforzheim, Trondheim, Ystad, Schömberg, and most recently, Carson City, Nevada. The competition will be returning to the mustache motherland of Germany in 2005 where supposedly "It will be bigger than Oktoberfest." Beer is good but mustaches are fantastic!

Jake Futernick

#8 THE DICTATOR 'STACHE

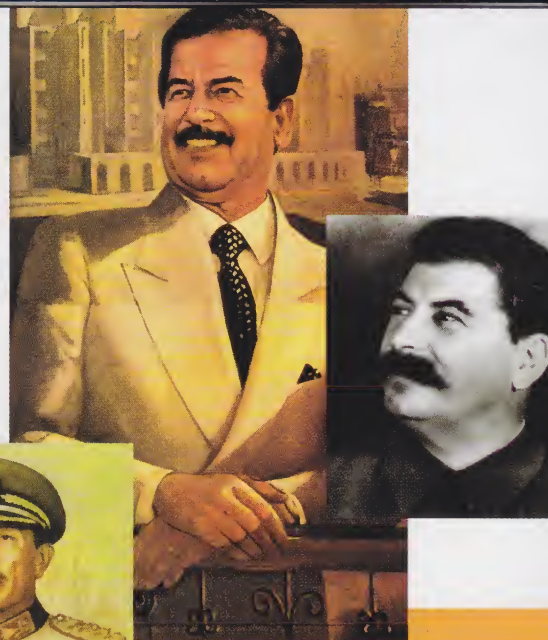
ALSO KNOWN AS: The great evil in the sky

FASHIONABLE IN: Iraq, Egypt, Chile, the former Soviet Union, anywhere human rights are being violated by a man with a mustache

SEE: Saddam, Stalin, Anwar Sadat, Augusto Pinochet, Francisco Franco

What is it about a man who wears a moustache? Why does he always seem to be in control? Is it that he keeps his upper lip hidden, like an ace in the hole? Similar in style to the Tom Selleck, the Dictator holds a dark, genocidal streak in place of any sex appeal. Almost every brutal dictator of note is more or less identified by his trademark, dominating 'stache. Mass murders Augusto Pinochet and Francisco Franco wore one, but nowadays it is most closely identified as "The Saddam." Even when George Orwell was writing *1984* he imagined Big Brother—his fashionable all-seeing/all-lying talking head—as rocking a whale tale beneath his nose. Judging from the history, all we can do is pray to god that W. keeps his upper lip closely shaven.

James Kirkland



LAW OF INERTIA'S

TOP 10 FAVORITE MUSTACHES

It's official, after a long and shameful period of neglect, the mustache is making a comeback. After the height of it's popularity in the late '70's and early 80's, the mustache soon after fell into ill regard, replaced with the lamest facial hair fashion of all time, the '90's Gen X goatee. This injustice shall not be tolerated any longer! To commemorate the joyous return of the 'stache, we've put together another top ten list for you, our favorite mustaches of all time.



#7 THE 16-YEAR-OLD-TEN-HAIR MUSTACHE

ALSO KNOWN AS: The awkward phase 'stache

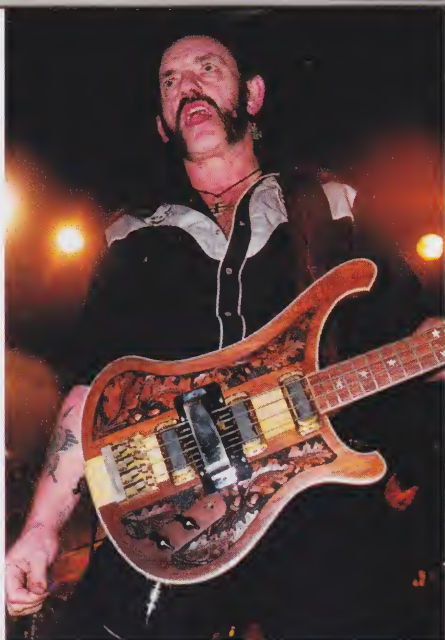
FASHIONABLE IN: Classmates voted most likely to wield a gun or make home explosives

SEE ALSO: Frida Kahlo



When you look back on the photographs of your youth, one question will surely come to mind: Why, for the love of god, didn't anyone tell me to pick up a razor and shave? Your family probably thought it was cute to see you "becoming a man" and you bought into that. Besides, a new mustache is kind of fun to lick and get food stuck in, right? But then, the fear sets in. What if this is the most hair my upper lip will ever grow? It made sense; some hair is programmed to stop growing at a certain length and thickness—like armpit and pubic hair. What if your mustache hair got confused? That's when you decided to spare the hair and wear it unabashedly. Then you realized that getting laid was the true path to "becoming a man" and that your 10 hair mustache was doing nothing but slowing you down.

Georgi Goldman



#6 THE MUSICAL 'STACHE

ALSO KNOWN AS: The Lemmy

FASHIONABLE IN: The '60's, '70's, '80's, '90's, '00's and beyond...

SEE ALSO: Derek Smalls, David Crosby, the Doobie Brothers, Jimi Hendrix, Hall and Oates, Le Tigre, Sonny Bono, Carlos Santana, Kirk Hammett, James Hetfield

Who would win in a fight between Lemmy and God? Trick question: Lemmy is God! Nothing sums up rock and roll decadence better than Motorhead's Lemmy Kilmister and his fantastic upside-down-U shaped facial appendage (and no, I'm not referring to the mole). As Motorhead rose to fame in the metal and hard rock world of the late '70's, Lemmy and his leather clad biker look became synonymous with the movement. Almost as recognizable as his Rickenbacker bass or his raised mic stand, Lemmy's mustache has been often imitated but never duplicated. Parodied in *This Is Spinal Tap* by Derek Smalls, groupie stories run rampant about his moustache becoming entangled in the muffs of a few over-zealous fans. Overkill? Perhaps. Orgasmatron? Most definitely.

Aaron Lefkove



#5 THE HITLER

ALSO KNOWN AS: The Square Button

FASHIONABLE IN: Nazi Germany

SEE ALSO: Charlie Chaplin

The square button mustache was a popular mainstay among gentlemen in the early part of the 20th century. Initially sported by silent-screen star Charlie Chaplin, it came to international prominence when a little-known German Chancellor was just getting his Third Reich off the ground. Fueled by methamphetamines, a knack for public speaking, and a cabinet of cross-dressing speed freaks, Adolf Hitler and his small hairy tuft left a mark on history that still gets anti-defamation groups all fired up. Years later, after allied soldiers had liberated the camps and defeated the Reich, The Hitler would live on in infamy as a sign of hatred in the western world and a serious fashion faux pas. The Hitler is still worn without any sense of irony in certain Asian communities and has been at the center of at least one episode of the epitome of Jewish humor, *Seinfeld*. Fascism never looked so good!

Aaron Lefkove

#4 THE JOHN WATERS

ALSO KNOWN AS: The King of Camp

FASHIONABLE IN: Baltimore-area trailer parks

SEE ALSO: Chocolate milk drinkers, Tango dancers, Little Richard

After World War I, European artists and architects began to move away from traditional ornamentation towards a simple, clean aesthetic. Champions of modernism like Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe would convince generations of artists that "Less is More." Nothing embodies this doctrine better than John Waters's moustache. It is perhaps the tiniest and creepiest piece of facial hair in the nation. Without that sliver of hair above his lip, John Waters would look just like your average neat freak. But with it, his face has become synonymous with American sleaze for over 30 years. Waters' presents his moustache like a dare. We all know how easy it would be to grow, but none of us has the balls to actually trim one for ourselves. If we did, we wouldn't be allowed within 300 yards of playgrounds or elementary schools, much like Mr. Waters himself.

Tim Holden





#3 THE ROLLIE FINGERS

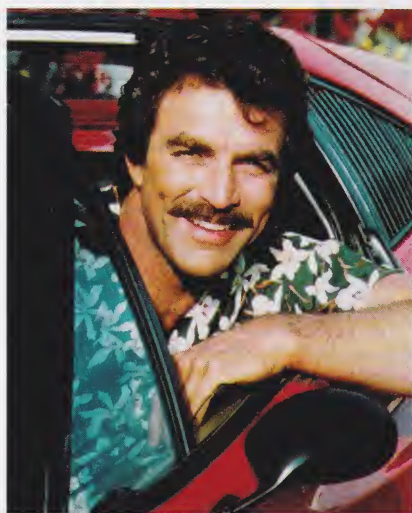
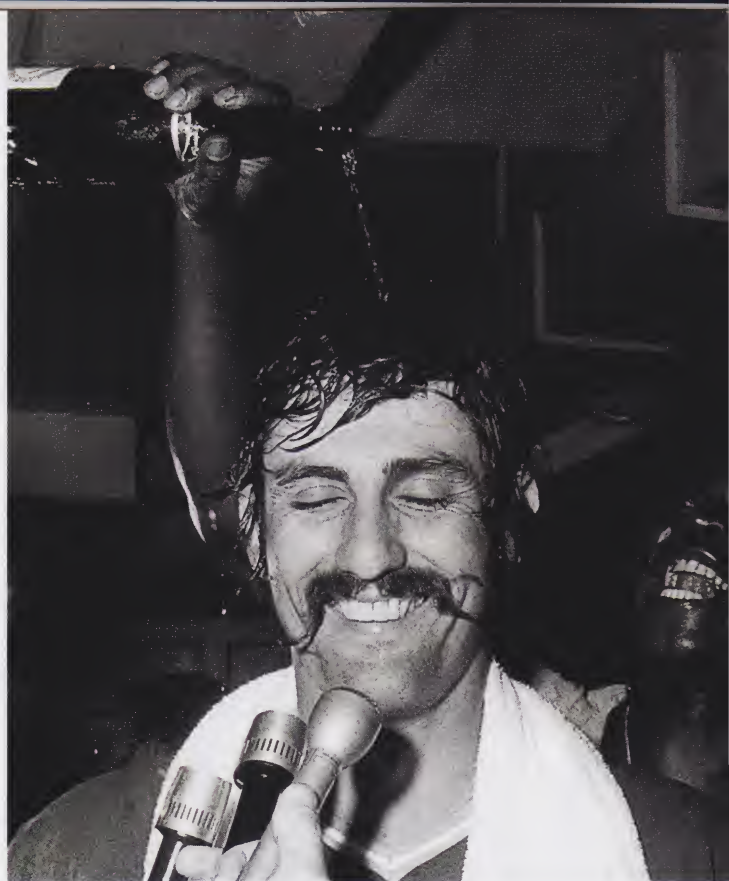
ALSO KNOWN AS: The Handlebar, The Curved Cookie Duster, The Awesomest Thing Ever

FASHIONABLE IN: Monocle stores

SEE ALSO: Wyatt Earp, Gene Shalit

The year: 1972. The setting: the October Classic. A crowd of 53,000 at Riverfront Stadium grows restless as the heavily favored Red's are already down by a run to an underdog team that hasn't won a title in 41 years, the Oakland A's. Pete Rose steps up to the plate and stares down the tall, slender Rollie Fingers. He winds and blows a blistering fastball right by Charlie Hustle. Rose adjusts his massive wad of chew and tries to focus, but finds himself at a loss, mesmerized by Rollie's 'stache, as his signature slider skids by and the battle is all but over. And so it goes for Rose as Fingers and the A's slowly bedazzle their way to the world championship. Fingers' powerful handlebar again leads the charge to October dominance for the next two years, with Fingers twisting the '74 series MVP behind his waxy bars. Such is the power of the Cy Young winning Fingers, such is the power of 'stache.

Steve Basilone



#2 THE TOM SELLECK

ALSO KNOWN AS: The Magnum, The Lip Caterpillar, The Cop 'Stache, The Gay Cop 'Stache and The Walker Texas Ranger

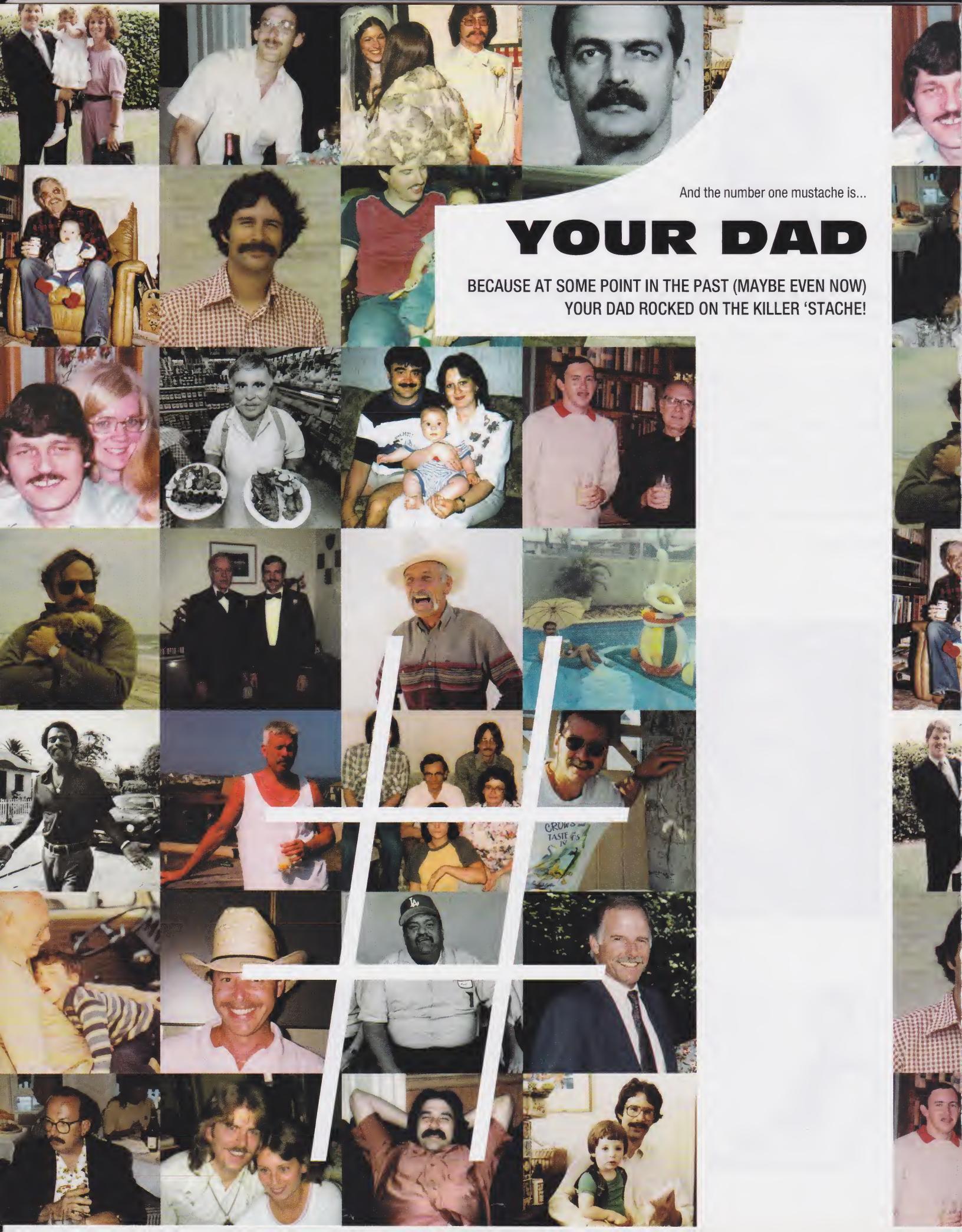
FASHIONALBE IN: Turkey (For those in and around Istanbul, the mustache, namely the Selleck, is more than just decorative facial hair, it is in fact, a national institution)

SEE ALSO: Leon Trotsky, Wade Boggs, Freddie Mercury, Ned Flanders, Geraldo, ironic hipsters and of course the incomparable, Burt Reynolds

The Selleck has maintained not only quiet integrity, but international popularity for decades now, making it perhaps the industry standard in the world of the 'stache. His mustache prowess has even spawned the annual "Selleck Classic" at the Sirkus bar in Reykjavik, Iceland. Organizers of the popular event claim that the competition has inspired hundreds of young Icelandic men to cultivate the perfect homage to the heartthrob and his magnificent 'stache. Throughout the rest of the world, everyone from Communist theorists to base ball greats to cartoon icons have sported the Selleck. Its track record stands for itself; no other facial hair formation oozes with such sex appeal. Case in point, the great *Magnum P.I.* had a veritable harem of women in his Hawaiian bungalow, Hall of Famer Wade Boggs' batting average was eclipsed only by his "scoring percentage," and the power of the Selleck was so great that it made even flaming front man Freddie Mercury irresistible to women. Hell, I even find myself slightly aroused when I think of Geraldo in Capone's vault. Now that, dear friends, is a mighty, mighty mustache.

Steve Basilone





And the number one mustache is...

YOUR DAD

BECAUSE AT SOME POINT IN THE PAST (MAYBE EVEN NOW)
YOUR DAD ROCKED ON THE KILLER 'STACHE!





GEOFF of THURSDAY's top 10 instrumental records...

KILL YOUR RADIO 1



MOGWAI: EP+6

Absolutely my favorite instrumental record of all time. I used to think Mogwai was stupid hippie shit. Our guitar player, Steve, would always fight with me over not listening to them. I remember we were driving through the mountains of California on our first tour and Steve left them on repeat. After a few spins, I realized that I was in love with the almighty Mogwai. When we got to San Francisco, I went on a secret mission to Amoeba Records. Steve caught me

and never let me forget that he was right. This was my soundtrack to falling in love. I remember lying around with my lady listening to this, time standing still. I guess I really do have to thank Steve for forcing this band on me. (Chemical Underground: 2001)



GOSPEED YOU! BLACK EMPEROR: LIFTYR SKINNY

The darkest and most epic band of our generation hands down! This punk rock orchestra builds beautiful songs slowly until they are too massive to be controlled and then tears them down with an apocalyptic climax. All that's left sparkles like shards of glass floating down a river. The opening track finds the group slowly waking up. Each instrument enters warily and stretches towards the ceiling. The lines reach upward in pitch and volume gradually, almost

timidly. Just when it seems that the song can't climb any higher, the rhythm section thunders in with the force of a drum corps, and the rising motion becomes pure ascension. Don't be thrown off when you end up in Coney Island at the start of the first of this two disc set—the record still has plenty of distance to travel. (Kranky: 2000)



BOARDS OF CANADA: TWOISM

The Boards use delicate and damaged sounds to create an amazingly soulful debut. The record is little more than a sampled drum beat but still as sexy and dark as PJ Harvey in a black dress. Imagine DJ Shadow without the scratching and fast tracks and you get a decent idea of what the Boards are up to. Most people that attempt to make this kind of music end up with something you'd hear in the background of a yuppie cocktail lounge. Thankfully, the Boards

create something so pointed and tense that it could never show up on a Starbucks Fresh Blends CD. As the title suggests, this album is perfect for sharing with a special someone in the dark. The melodies intertwine and separate in a bittersweet hymn, suggesting all love contains loneliness. (Music70: 1995)



CLINT MANSELL: REQUIEM FOR A DREAM

The singer from Pop Will Eat Itself has outdone all of his movie soundtrack peers with this score. Mansell uses the central theme in different contexts throughout the movie. The fear and excitement of an injected euphoria is captured here: each string of the violin trembles like a vein. Toy pianos and synthesizers race through the nightmares of a speed addiction. Every time I listen to this, I can see the sun setting behind the dilapidated roller coasters of Coney

Island. Combining menacing strings with drum machine beats, this theme was strong enough to match the dark intensity of *Requiem For A Dream* and accessible enough to be co-opted to push the latest *Lord of the Rings* movie. (Nonesuch: 2000)



PELICAN: AUSTRALASIA

This band shows that instrumental music doesn't have to be pretty elevator music. This shit is brutally heavy as the band lumbers forward like a redwood falling. It's impossible to tell if the whole thing is happening in slow motion or if the enormous size and weight of the music throws off all sense of scale. Like a cross between Neurosis and Sabbath, Pelican hypnotize with repetition and then change without warning. *Australasia* is an appropriate name

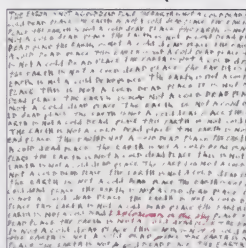
for a record as vast and foreign as this. Hearing the song "Angel Tears" for the first time is like getting washed out to sea at high tide. (Hydra Head: 2003)



GAVIN BRYARS: JESUS' BLOOD NEVER FAILED ME YET

So, I'm totally breaking my theme here. Oh well. Seriously though, the singing is only a sample of a "tramp" moaning an old gospel hymn. This record is similar to Glass' *Music With Changing Parts* in that the initial melody never changes but everything around is so dramatically altered that it becomes a different song. The first section's strings underscore the faith and devotion in the song with a real sense of longing. Gavin Bryars orchestrates this

sample so perfectly that the tramp's song goes from heartbreaking to glorious. At the end, Tom Waits lends his voice to the tune, sounding like a savior for all the broken souls of the world. (Point: 1993)



EXPLOSIONS IN THE SKY: THE EARTH IS NOT A COLD

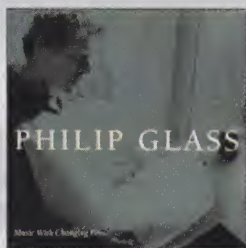
It's safe to say that the drummer is not the focal point of your average band. This band changes all that. The drumming alternately gives the music a sense of weightlessness and downright heaviness. The second track, "The Only Moment We Were Alone," is a perfect example. Guitars glimmer faintly for the first minute and a half and then the drums burst in, bringing with them all the drunken warmth of summer. As if suddenly self-conscious, the drummer quickly stops and lets the music simmer. After waiting almost three minutes, the drums come crashing back in like little kids running on a hot sidewalk, full of innocence and energy. The end of the song can only be described as glorious. Even as the music breaks up the sense of hope never diminishes. (Temporary Residence: 2003)



B. FLEISCHMANN: A CHOIR OF EMPTY BEDS

This record may technically be an electronic record, but it sounds hauntingly natural. It gives you the feeling of a radiator humming over the rhythm of distant traffic. Occasionally it gets a little too blippy-electronica-shitty, but mostly it falls within the guidelines of good taste. The title says it all: *A Choir of Empty Beds* sends shivers up the back of your neck. As with the record *Welcome Tourist*, B. Fleischmann samples full bands playing and

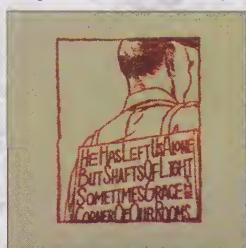
subverts them into any shape he sees fit. My friend Laura turned me on to this. She said it was like listening to someone breathing. As shocking as it sounds, she's right. This is the most intimate electronic record I've ever heard. (Fuzzy Box: 2000)



PHILIP GLASS: MUSIC WITH CHANGING PARTS

Without a doubt one of the finest contemporary composers in the world, Philip Glass knows how to rip it up. This record may be the missing link between Kraftwerk and, well, anything. Glass takes one melodic theme and lets it evolve over the course of an entire album. At first the repetitive keyboard line threatens to send you into a seizure. Then different tones come in at counterpoint. Eventually the melody and counterpoint switch places so

many times that you can't keep track. If you leave this record on repeat for an entire day, you might start to think like Andrew, our keyboard player. Seriously. All of the Thursday boys love Glass and you can hear shades of his *Kundun* soundtrack on the song "War All The Time." (Nonesuch: 1994)



A SILVER MT. ZION: HE HAS LEFT US ALONE BUT

This Godspeed side project is a touch more experimental than the Emperor, if you can believe that. Distant singing communes with strings, piano, and overheard radio transmissions, resulting in a masterpiece that's equal parts gorgeous and scary. When you listen to this record it's more like being somewhere than listening to something. Tim Gilles, who has worked on and mixed all of our records, always tells me that the marriage of music and

words is an uncomfortable one. In his opinion, words mask the true beauty of music and he claims that music is, in fact, the voice of God. The song "13 Angels Stand Guard 'Round The Corner of Your Bed" is the closest thing that I can imagine to hearing God sing. (Constellation: 2000)



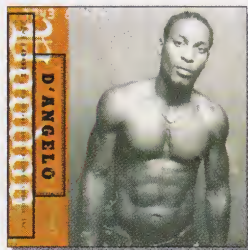
MINUS THE BEAR's top 10 records of all time...

KILL YOUR RADIO₂



WE R GRAZZZI: WOLVES WITH PRETTY LIPS

From start to finish this record rocks my fucking world. We had a chance to tour with this foxy man and his two ladies and I just fell in love. This is the third CD from this band and by far the best one. My favorite track has to be "Making You Queens Tonight" with awesome lyrics such as "I've got a new look for you / pale lipstick and a little rouge / I wanna paint your lips / I wanna dress your eyes." Man, any song about dressing boys up like girls is right up my alley! To boot, they are three of the sexiest people I've ever seen. (Suicide Squeeze: 2004)



D'ANGELO: VOOBOD

Speaking of a sexy man, this is sex! This CD is the best "getting stoned and making out with the old lady" CD. The first time I *really* listened to this I was whacked out of my mind on mushrooms. I put on some headphones and took this sort of magic carpet ride from heaven that changed the way that I look at music. The vocals on this album are fucking amazing with layers and layers of beautiful vocal tracks. If you wanna have a good time I suggest you smoke a huge bowl with your old lady or old man, lay back with the lights dim, and do some kissing to this awesome record. (Virgin: 2000)



BECK: SEA CHANGE

Tour can drain all the mental and physical energy from you, so this record calms me when I start to lose my mind. When it's my turn to take the wheel the morning after a long night of partying, this is the record that always starts the drive. It lets the rest of the guys sleep and the lyrics remind me that we all get worn out sometimes. I prefer this record to anything else he has done, especially for the string arrangements. They are both lush and sparse when

need be. (Interscope: 2002)



THE CURE: KISS ME, KISS ME, KISS ME

From the first track, "The Kiss," this record had me hooked. I am attached to this record and listened to it constantly while riding my bike to work in 1987. It covers a huge range of emotions, from the somber "If Only Tonight We Could Sleep" to the hyper "Why Can't I Be You?" In many ways this was the transition record to their later work, most of which I did not love. However, when I listen to this record now I realize how differently my life has unfolded than I

thought it would when I was riding my bike to work when I was 14. (Elektra: 1987)



SHUDDER TO THINK: PONY EXPRESS RECORD

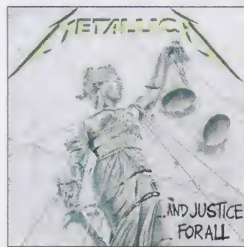
Holy fuck, how did I miss this when I was a kid? I knew this band existed but paid them no attention. At the first show on our latest tour, I stepped into the venue as this intensely fucked up music blasted through the speakers. I stopped and listened to the odd rhythms, operatic falsetto, and creepy, nonsensical lyrics. I got the record immediately and listened to it non-stop, air-drumming along the entire time. I'm stunned by how timeless this record

is. This fucker got more spins on my iPod than Jay-Z. (Epic: 1994)



SADE: LOVER'S ROCK

We were in Spain. I was drunk and stoned inside our hostel and everyone else in the band was asleep. At about 7 am I had two choices: go back out and get more drinks or get in bed and listen to Sade. I chose Sade. Do this: smoke a bowl, put on headphones, turn out the lights, lie down, and listen to this record. Experience the honesty of the lyrics and let the music pour into you. It's a painting of the ropes that bind lovers together and the effects of those same ropes breaking apart. It's all right if you cry a little because this thing is as sad as hell. (Epic: 2000)



METALLICA: ...AND JUSTICE FOR ALL

This record is the reason I picked up a guitar. If it were not for Metallica, I would be stuck in a nine to five selling toasters. *Justice* (as metal dudes call it) was the first time I fell in love with music and who cares if it was '80's thrash metal? At least it was more substantial than Vanilla Ice or Warrant. Plus, it has some of the best riffs ever recorded. "Blackened," "Harvester of Sorrow," Jesus Christ! That shit's heavier than Kirstie Alley! Plus, it's a great alternative to road rage when you're driving the van. Throw it on, hum the solos, and drive straight through Wyoming. (Elektra: 1988)



FOUR TET: ROUNDS

The second I put this on I knew I would love it. The spiraling chimes of the opening track set the perfect tone for the next 45 minutes. Kieran Hebden's cut-up pianos, guitars, and drums pull you back and forth between one beat and the next, never really knowing where you are going to land. This record has provided limitless inspiration and with each listen I hear something new that amazes me. A couple times on the Braid reunion tour after we'd play, I'd go in the van alone, turn on the A/C, take off my sweaty-ass show clothes, and blast this record. "Boo-yah" achieved. (Domino: 2003)



THE MONORCHID: LET THEM EAT...

No matter what, the instant I get behind the wheel of the van I start feeling sleepy. This is my get-up-and-go soundtrack. From the first note to the last, this record keeps my eyes open and my pulse racing. The bass lines, nasally vocals, and sparse guitars compliment each other in a really fucked up way that no one else will ever top. By the end of the record I feel like I've been popping mini-thins and drinking Red Bull by the bucket, leaving me with the shakes, jitters, and some seriously blood shot eyes. (Lovitt: 1996)



NOTORIOUS B.I.G.: READY TO DIE

Hands down, this is my favorite hip-hop record of all time. Nothing gets me more hyped to play a show than listening to "Gimme The Loot." As he began making the crossover to pop-stardom, Biggie was still laying down some gritty-ass, dirty tracks. No one could match his flow or lyrical wit. Truly a classic album, so much so I don't even have to put this record on, the songs just continually play in my head. (Bad Boy: 1994)



MIKE of DARKEST HOUR's top 10 records of all time...

KILL YOUR RADIO₃



AC/DC: POWERAGE

This is one of the best AC/DC records of all time. I remember being 14 and buying this at the local Kmart. This record fucking changed my life and how I viewed rock and roll. "Kicked In The Teeth" and "Down Payment Blues" are two of my favorite songs. A lot of people see AC/DC and they think "Man, Angus is God," but you know what? Malcolm

is AC/DC's secret weapon. He is the man in the shadows who holds it down. On old AC/DC records he was panned to one side and Angus to the other. I used to pan the guitar all the way to the left or right and just listen to Malcolm jam out. It's hard to pick a favorite, but for me this record says everything that good rock is. (Epic: 1978)



METALLICA: MASTER OF PUPPETS

Hands down the best Metallica record and possibly one of the best metal records ever. It is so melodic and yet as heavy as metal can get. The main riff in "Battery" took me months to perfect. I bought the tab book for this record and then played sick so that I could miss school for two days to learn every song. Needless to say, my mom found me head banging in the basement and I was screwed. The most amazing thing about Metallica is when Kirk Hammett solos

and James Hetfield is riffing behind him. The songs have amazing riffs that develop under the solo. I can't help but feel sad when I hear this record again. Metallica, what happened to you? Cliff where are you? We need you! (Elektra: 1986)



THE CURE: PORNOGRAPHY

The Cure is one of those bands I listen to every day. There are plenty of sappy newer Cure songs, but back in the day these were some sad dudes. There is no darker record than *Pornography*. No matter how many bands layer keyboard after keyboard or pile on the goth makeup, they can't out-goth The Cure. They will forever reign supreme as the most pissed-off, depressed band on the planet. The Cure influenced many of the early Darkest Hour lyrics.

There is just something about Robert Smith's poetry that hits you in the heart and his delivery is unmatched. It even has a bit of a Neurosis feel to it. I would definitely recommend this record to metal heads. It has the passion, anger, and power of any metal record, in a much darker package. (Elektra: 1982)



DAMNATION AD: NO MORE DREAMS OF HAPPY ENDINGS

This record made me lose faith in music for a long time, and to this day they are the unsung heroes of hardcore/metal. Every band that is big in metalcore today has one dude that loves Damnation. They combined the heaviness of Metallica with the mood of The Cure. The guitar sound is the definitive sound of metal: a Marshall 800 with a Rat pedal. There it is, that's how you get the most killer tone in metal, there are no more secrets. The cover art is fucking dark and

demented without cheese like a decapitated head or something. Lastly, Mike's vocals sound like he is ripping his voice out. Damnation AD started all this, and this is the thanks they get? Now, go buy this record and see the light! (Jade Tree: 1995)



HUEY LEWIS AND THE NEWS: SPORTS

If AC/DC wrote the blueprint for songwriting then Huey made the revisions. *Sports* has all the hits. If there was ever a band that could rock on record it was Huey Lewis And The News. So much of this record is not even guitar driven. In a lot of songs the guitar is just part of the main hook, not really the foundation. That is why I like this record so much. It kind of reinvented how songs could be structured and put together. Music has a way of taking people

to a different time. Huey makes me feel like I am 12 years-old when the heaviest song I knew was the theme to *Footloose*. (Chrysalis: 1983)



AT THE GATES: SLAUGHTER OF THE SOUL

If you know anything about Darkest Hour or metalcore in general then you know this record should be on here. The funny thing is that most bands that rip this off end up selling more records than they did. This is real metal and this record is the fucking bible of thrash. The guitar sound is so thick and has this industrial feel to it. In a lot of ways ATG was the AC/DC of metal. They found what they did well and just said, "Fuck it. Let's keep doing it!" The

first time I heard "Terminal Spirit Disease," it changed my life. I had thought death metal was just all about cookie monster style vocals and here they did the opposite and it just thrashed my face off! (Earache: 1996)



PROPAGANDHI: TODAY'S EMPIRES, TOMORROW'S ASHES

When so much about punk was tied up in image and not caring about musicianship, Propagandhi changed the rules. They have a metal guitar sound, metal playing, and even some metal riffage, but there is no question these are some of the punkest motherfuckers on the planet! I was a late bloomer. I never really liked them and it just wasn't my thing, but when I got this record that all changed. The songs are full of hooks and the riffs are so good they

make me laugh. That is what I missed in a lot of metal. Most metal was heavy and the riffs ruled but it just said nothing, it was just white noise. They prove that you can be intelligent, insightful, and still thrash people's faces off! (Fat Wreck: 2001)



OZZY OSBOURNE: NO REST FOR THE WICKED

Zakk Wylde, Ozzy's and now Black Label Society's guitarist, is the metal riff master. When he plays guitar you fucking know he is. The riffs here are some of the best arena metal riffs ever. His guitar playing married with Ozzy's voice is the definitive classic metal sound. If there is one guy that can make you stop and go, "Fuck!" It's Zakk Wylde! The thing I love about his solos is how he adds a hint of melody. He also has the best ability to tie a solo back into the

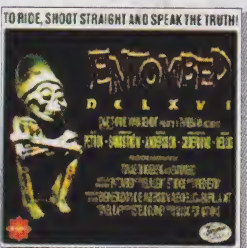
rest of the song. I used to play hockey all the time in these crappy leagues when I was in middle school and one time this record was the soundtrack to a middle school hockey riot. You don't get more metal than that! (Elektra: 1988)



PANTERA: VULGAR DISPLAY OF POWER

This is a bit of a guilty pleasure for me. I definitely loved Pantera as a kid and this record still holds up. The attitude on this record was the only way I could get through a day of high school. I saw Pantera play with Sacred Reich at this crappy redneck club. The pit was amazing and it was right before they got huge so you could stage dive and shit! You could get on the stage and touch these dudes. Now they seem bigger than God, but back then it was the most real thing.

Dimebag Darrell is next to Zakk Wylde in guitar godliness. I love it when he just jams out a solo over the bass. It sounds like old Van Halen with balls. (Elektra: 1992)



ENTOMBED: DELUX TO RIDE, SHOOT STRAIGHT...

I have talked a ton about guitar tones, but no one kills the fucking kings of metal guitar, Entombed. The guitar sound on this record is crushing. While every kid wants to buy a Mesa Boogie and turn down all the mids so they can have some crappy nu-metal sound, Entombed did the opposite. They fucking turned the mid knob up and broke it off! The sound is just crushing. It's rock, it's metal, fuck, it's both and it fucking kills. Their lyrics were always clever and funny. They managed to keep

that shit dark and heavy but add this kind of weird sense of humor and make it all their own. Entombed is the band I wish I was in. To me they own metal and it is just a shame that more kids don't recognize that. (Threeman: 1997)



NATE of CONVERGE's top 10 overlooked records...

KILL YOUR RADIO 4



TASTE: SELF TITLED

Rory Gallagher is one of the greatest rock guitarists ever and still almost nobody knows who he is. Before he went solo, he had a band that was called Taste. I think this record was overshadowed because it came out around the same time that Cream was making big waves internationally. It is every bit as good (if not better) than any Cream album. If you can hunt it down on vinyl it is worth picking up just for the eight-minute dirge, "Catfish," which is a cover of

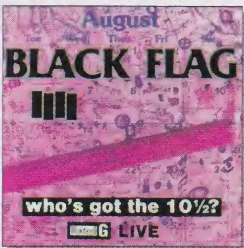
a traditional blues song. One word: heavy! (Polydor: 1969)



MOUNTAIN: NANTUCKET SLEIGHRIDE

Not as well known as some of their contemporaries, Mountain just doesn't get the credit they deserve. They're definitely known more for their hit "Mississippi Queen" than for anything off of this record. This is where they really explored their dynamics as a band and found out what they were capable of. The title track is a perfect example of how to go from quiet and pretty to unbelievably heavy and crushing in the blink of an eye. It's a concept album about the

Nantucket whale ship Essex which was rammed at sea by a giant whale and for months afterwards the crew was forced to resort to cannibalism while floating aimlessly in lifeboats across the ocean. How's that for subject matter? (Sony: 1971)



BLACK FLAG: WHO'S GOT THE 10 1/2

Yeah, I know, it's Black Flag. Obvious choice. Seriously, how many of you actually own this record? Everyone always has the studio albums and maybe *Live '84*, but no one ever gets this record. This record captures Black Flag at their very best. It may not have been the classic line up, but it's by far the best recording of most of the songs on here. Rollins' voice is at its best and you actually get an idea of how intense this band was live. The

version of "My War" is far superior to the studio version. "Slip It In" gets crossed with "Gimme Gimme Gimme" to make one giant song where Rollins harasses and insults the audience. An amazing record and a perfect example of what a hardcore band should be. (SST: 1986)



ROSE TATTOO: ROCK N' ROLL OUTLAW

Did you ever wish AC/DC made more records in the '70's? Imagine a tougher, faster, beefier AC/DC with slide guitars. Almost every song on this record is about rock and roll! Rose Tattoo was straight up dirty rock and roll for the working class. They never cared about hitting it big or getting rich. They just wanted to riff and it's apparent on this steamroller of a record. Do you like Guns 'N Roses? Well, you can thank Rose Tattoo. GnR's live staple "Nice Boys" is a Rose Tattoo

cover off of this record and the original version is a hundred times better. If this is not enough to convince you, then maybe this will: their singer Angry Anderson played Ironbar in *Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome*. Enough said. (Repertoire: 1978)



ENTOMBED: WOLVERINE BLUES

Not really a lost classic, but since this is going to print it might be my only chance to say this publicly: thank you Entombed for letting me rip off every guitar riff you've ever written. This is one of the greatest metal records ever. *Wolverine Blues* was the first record I ever heard that took the technicality and ferocity of death metal and crossed it with the energy of punk and hardcore, then added the attitude and style of

Detroit rock a la The Stooges. They invented the guitar sound that every metal band since has tried to emulate. My advice to all of those bands: give it up, you will never top this record. Entombed are royalty to me and if you don't own this record then I feel sorry for you. (Earache: 1993)



HOSE.GOT.CABLE: SELF-TITLED (double seven-inch)

Maybe it's because I'm from Virginia and I have a soft spot in my heart for these guys. This band was phenomenal. Every time they played they broke their equipment and one of them ended up getting hurt. They could be compared to Drive Like Jehu, but they were much gnarlier and way more intense. This double seven-inch captured what they were like as a band. The opening song "Chevy Chase Motherfucker" is an

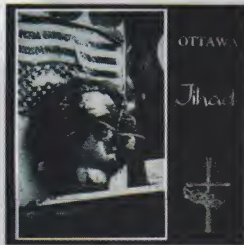
out of control punk epic that shows their understanding of how to be intense and at the same time heavy without sounding metal. Bands like this don't exist anymore because creativity doesn't seem to be respected much in the punk community these days. For every DIY punk or hardcore record that comes out these days, I'd much rather sit and listen to hose.got.cable. (Tenderizer: 1994)



LOW: THE CURTAIN HITS THE CAST

Beautiful, dark, haunting, and at the same time unbelievably heavy. Alan Sparhawk and Mimi Parker are like the Gram Parsons and Emmylou Harris of our generation. With angelic harmonies that lift you up and crush you, this is a record that everyone should own. It has influenced a myriad of other bands and songwriters, Isis being great example. The standout for me is the 14 minute ambient noise/haunting folk song "Do You Know How To Waltz?," although there

are quite a few other amazing songs on this record such as "Stars Gone Out" and "Lust." Coincidentally, the video for "Over The Ocean" is quite possibly my favorite video of all time next to Pink Floyd's "Learning To Fly." (Vernon Yard: 1996)



OTTAWA / JIHAD: SPLIT LP

Although Jihad contributes a respectable half to this record, the Ottawa side is what makes it worth owning. I've gotten rid of a lot of my punk and hardcore records but this is one that I will never part with. Ottawa really brought blast beats into hardcore. I know that's debatable, but it definitely turned a lot of kids on to grindcore. After this came out, every metallic hardcore band quit trying to sound like Unbroken and started trying to sound like Ottawa. It's

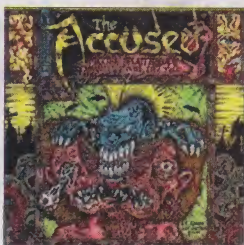
a real shame they never recorded anything else and if they did someone please send it to me. My copy still has the price tag on it, \$4.25. Remember when you could buy an LP from a distro for less than five bucks? Those were the days. (Council: 1994)



CAPTAIN BEYOND: SELF-TITLED

Imagine if Mastodon existed in the early '70's. Captain Beyond were somewhat of an enigma of a band because they combined aspects of early prog-rock with a much more American sound akin to the Allman Brothers. They were the southern version of Yes. This record is heavy. Not in the bone crushing, low-end monster riff sort of way, but in a lay back and take it all in sort of way. Impressive and complicated song structures mixed with soulful vocals about

things that could only be drug-induced. "Mesmerization Eclipse" was covered by Entombed almost 30 years later, but Captain Beyond's version is moodier and darker and altogether better. If you want a new classic rock record to listen to, go out and find this. You won't be disappointed. (Capricorn: 1972)



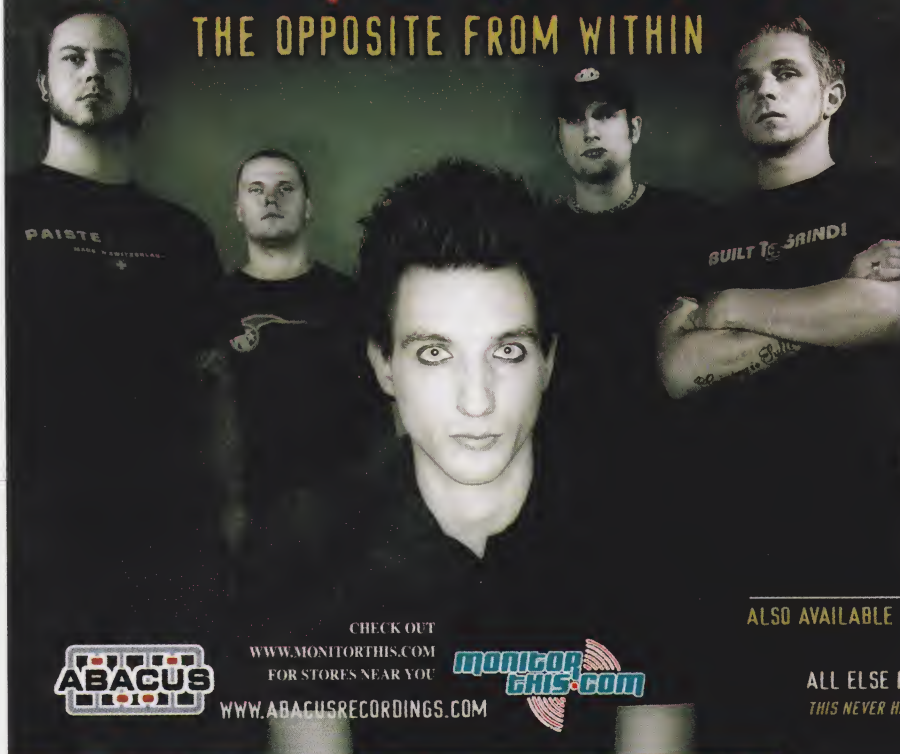
THE ACCUSED: MARTHA SPLATTERHEAD'S MADDEST

Here's another record that influenced countless bands. Aspects of this can be heard in everything from Rorschach to Converge to Nashville Pussy. This was straight up thrashy hardcore played dirty, mean, and out of control. The Accused were a part of the first real wave of crossover bands in the '80's along with D.R.I., C.O.C., and The Crumbsuckers. It was undoubtedly hardcore, but it was undoubtedly metal at the same time. They took Brotherhood on their first

U.S. tour which was considered a bold move at the time because The Accused were a bunch of drunk party animals and Brotherhood were a straightedge hardcore band. This record is one of the few from that era that is still amazing when I listen to it now. Oh yeah, Sir Mix-A-Lot is on here too. Splatter rock forever! (Combat: 1988)

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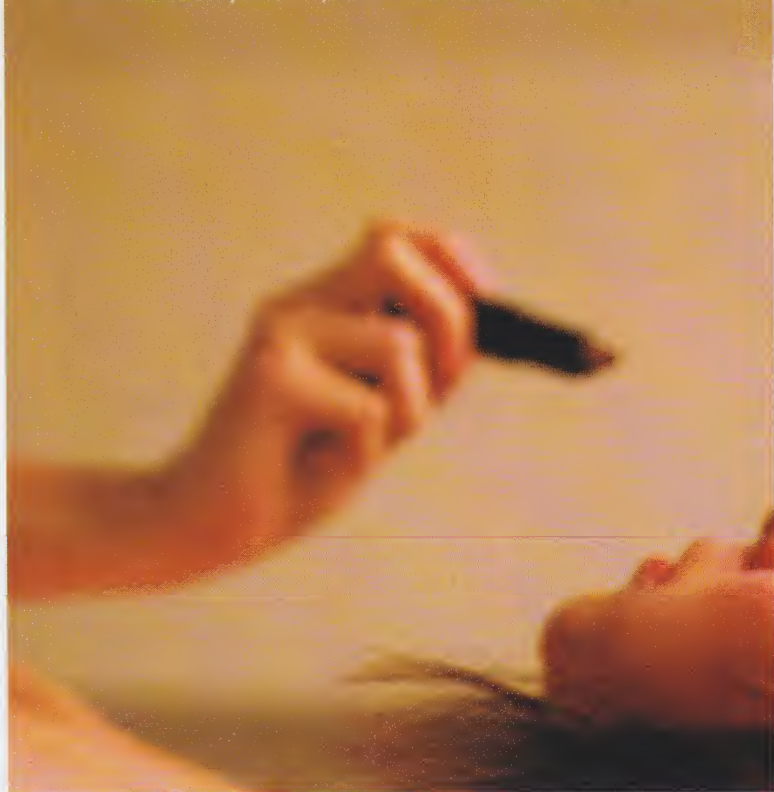


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Video Game Reviews



ASTRO BOY

"Who is Astro Boy?" you might ask. Not only was he the first Japanese manga cartoon, his lopsided fauxhawk/spike haircut is all the rage in the fashioncore world of today. As for the game, the visuals are hit and miss with a few areas that look fantastic, and others that could be mistaken for the jagged-edged days of the original Playstation. Metro City, home to much of the game, looks all right when you're flying around but up close reveals a barren, desolate place with a population that consists of ten people and a blimp. "But is the game any fun?" you ask again. There's a couple shining moments, but much of the game is fairly repetitive and get this—it's only around 4 hours long. My advice, get the GBA version developed by Treasure (of Ikaruga and Gunstar Heroes fame), it's probably the best 2d game to come out this year.

Sega (PS2)

Chris Moore



DOOM 3

Back in the day, I was the ultimate Doom fanatic. I made an ultra detailed level of my high school that included the parking lot, a secret door with ammo where my locker used to be, and the end boss in the principle's office. My friends and I used to play in the computer lab so much we shut down the entire network. Finally, nearly a decade later, there's another Doom title I can geek out to. This game is visually stunning, darker and even more frightening and than its predecessors. The thrills are cheap but effective. Monsters spawn right behind you and the lights go out all the time, leaving you with nothing but a racing pulse, a flashlight and a prayer. With all this running around in the dark, one annoying aspect is that you can't hold a flashlight and a gun at the same time. Apparently in the future they don't have hands-free flashlight technology. Thankfully, someone put out a "duct-tape" mod that attaches the flashlight on your gun.

(<http://ducttape.glenmurphy.com>)

Activision (PC)

Gabe Handford

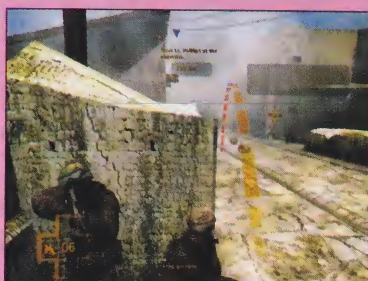


DRIV3R

David Manning once declared Rob Schneider's bomb The Animal "Another winner!" He also proclaimed Heath Ledger's performance in A Knight's Tale made him "This year's hottest new star!" Both of these quotes showed up in national ad campaigns, problem was, David Manning didn't exist. He was a creation of the Sony advertising department. So when reviews for Driv3r started showing up saying things like "Find out why the Playstation 2 will never be the same again," "Driv3r is nothing short of awesome," and a splashy TV commercial wanted us to "check out the game that started it all." I couldn't figure out who these critics were and why they were heaping so much praise on a crappy game. So what if Driv3r "started it all"? The South Korean company Saehan came out with the first portable MP3 player in '97 but now everyone's got an iPod. Vanilla Ice was a pioneer for white rappers but who still rocks a copy of To the Extreme? Driv3r is out there carrying the OG franchise but why anyone would play this over GTA San Andreas is completely beyond me.

Atari (Xbox, PS2, PC)

Jake Futernick



FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR

Ahh Zekistan, crown jewel of the Middle East. This fictitious country is your chance to meet an ancient culture and blow it to bits. Full Spectrum Warrior was developed by the U.S. Army as a training aid to teach soldiers about urban combat. From a third person perspective you lead two squads of soldiers whose ethnic diversity would make the ACLU proud. You must navigate your Asian, Latin, and Middle Eastern soldiers through and urban maze while rebel soldiers take pot shots at you and disappear into the city. While Full Spectrum Warrior is a solid game, it illustrates the Army's misconception of the threats faced in the Middle East. There are no suicide bombers, your troops do not come under mortar fire, and roadside bombs do not explode on a daily basis.

THQ (Xbox)

Adam Gorczyca.

continued on next page

MAKING MUSIC ON YOUR PS2

Funkmaster Flex Digital Hitz Factory and MTV Music Generator 3

Imagine some European guy holding down the keys on his Roland with a four/four count in the background producing the most trite, derivative junk imaginable, so predictable you could set your watch to it. Welcome to the world of music composition on your PS2.

Both Digital Hitz Factory and MTV Music Generator 3 consist of tons of samples and loops with a grid to place them on. They both work on the same principles, grouping samples into genres with basic cutting and pasting, effects like reverb and low pass filters, and BPM adjusting. Samples are broken up into drums, bass, riffs (or melody) and vocals with most of the music styles favoring a more electric sound.

The whole composition process involves a lot of trial and error, and most of your time is spent sifting through samples to find ones that don't suck (do yourself a favor and skip the R&B vocals). After awhile, the whole arranging aspect gets a little boring, and both offer difficult ways to get original content into your console.

In Digital Hitz Factory, you can hook up a microphone, and record your own vocals and samples. In MTV Music Generator 3 you can create new beats with the BeatBox (i.e. drum kit), and rip samples from audio CD's. Of the two, MTV's Music Generator has a cleaner and brighter interface, more tutorials, options and samples to choose from, and includes a remix feature which lets you take a shitty song and make it even shittier.

If you've used some of the more sophisticated PC music apps like Reason, then you'll be disappointed, but hey, for \$50 you can create really crap euro trance. What's not to like?

Gabe Handford



MADDEN VS. STREET FIGHTER

VS.

Madden 2005 Collector's Edition

Madden is back and just like you'd expect it, better than ever. More Playmaker controls, improved character animations, and something called the Hit Stick to crush your opponent and force a key turnover (or miss terribly depending on your timing). To commemorate the 15th anniversary of the Madden franchise, EA has put together a nice little package of goodies. In addition to the 2005 installment, the Collectors Edition (available only on the PS2) contains playable versions from back in the 16 bit days, historical playoff teams from the past 15 years, tons of bonus material, and a shiny silver box cover that would lead you to believe this thing is going to be worth a lot of money on eBay some day. Too bad it's already sold like a million copies.

EA Sports (Xbox, PS2, GameCube)

Matt Sharack

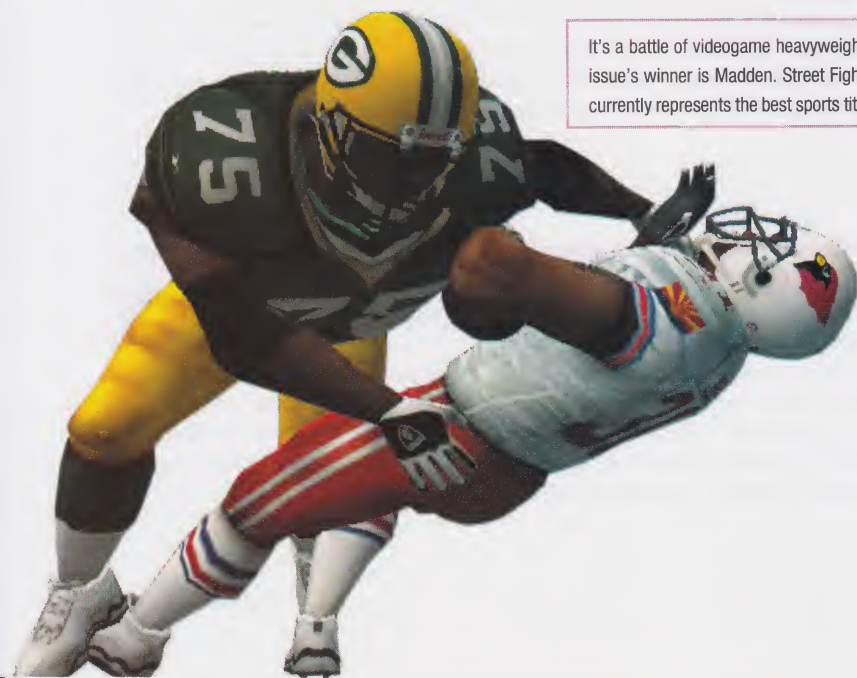
Street Fighter Anniversary Edition

Everyone's got their first great video game memory, be it Pong, ColecoVision, Mike Tyson's Punch Out, Zelda, Mario, whatever. It was the game that would lead to marathon late night sessions, the game that made homework an impossible task. Street Fighter was that game for me. One day after school I wandered into an arcade to find a bunch of kids crowded around a new machine. Buttons were being pounded, taunts exchanged, and lots of yelling marked the end of each match. With Street Fighter II, fighting games reached a new level of greatness and paved the way for the likes of Mortal Kombat, Soul Caliber and Tekken. This anniversary edition includes a "best of" of the many Street Fighter II editions (Alpha, Hyper Fighting, Champion Edition, etc...) called "Hyper Street Fighter II, the Anniversary Edition" and the often overlooked but very nice Street Fighter III Third Strike, not to mention a few other goodies.

Capcom (PS2)

Jake Futernick

It's a battle of videogame heavyweights, Madden and Street Fighter, but with an eye towards the present rather than the past, this issue's winner is Madden. Street Fighter was great and once represented the pinnacle of fighting games, but Madden is great and currently represents the best sports title on the market.



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DVD REVIEWS

Social Distortion Live In Orange County (Time Bomb)- Sometime at the dawn of the '80's Mike Ness and a handful of Orange County ruffians strung together a few three-chord odes to life as an outcast teenager. In the spirit of their east coast inspirations, The Ramones, Social Distortion relied on simple riffs and heart-on-sleeve lyrics to tell their story. There was something dangerous and refreshing about their style, it embodied rebellion. That was then, this is now. This DVD showcases the band live in the OC almost two decades after its inception. Over the past 20-something years, the songs haven't changed all that much, but somewhere along the way, middle age crept in on the band. As history shows, being cool and relevant while approaching 40 ain't easy. Like other timeworn acts that have managed to continue performing, watching Social Distortion play nowadays feels like seeing their tribute band. The songs sound the same, but the feeling of urgency is long gone. On *Live In Orange County*, Social D performs a healthy mix of songs ranging from a few gems dating back to 1982 to their modern classic, "Story of My Life." The

footage shows a gracious Ness that takes time in between every other song to thank both the old and new fans that made it out to the show. Towards the set's conclusion, Ness criticizes Guns 'N Roses and Motley Crüe for having broken up years ago. I couldn't help but think, "Well Mike, maybe those bands knew that the party was over." While Ness and his band deserve credit for sticking it out for all these years, after seeing this video, I feel assured that rock and roll should be left to the youth. **Frankie Corva**

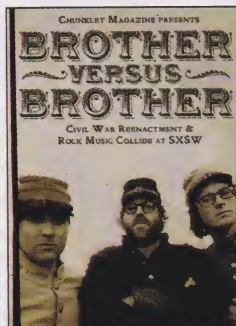
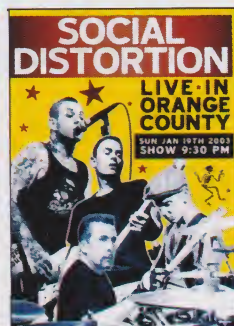
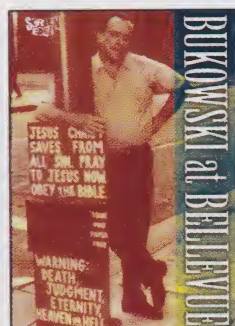
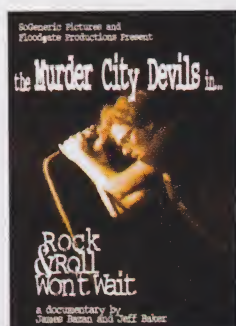
Brother Versus Brother: Civil War Reenactments and Rock Music Collide At SXSW (Chunklet Magazine)- Milk and cookies, peanut butter and jelly, Siegfried and Roy. You can now add Civil War reenactments and indie rock to that growing list of alliances. I take Civil War history serious and vow to someday engage in Civil War reenactments myself, so naturally when I picked up this DVD I was immediately sold. The film is centered on three Civil War re-enactors that spend a week at SXSW, Austin Texas' annual music industry conference, badgering the likes of Ted Leo, Mission

Of Burma, Superchunk, and The Murder City Devils about their views and knowledge of the war between the states. The two Confederate and one Union soldier entertain us with their unorthodox questions, such as, "Does each band prefers scurvy over dysentery?" and, "Who would in a battle between northern and southern bands?" The funniest thing these three knuckleheads propose is if each band would consider conducting live amputations onstage. Serious historians may consider this a mockery of America's favorite fascination, but I tip my woolen cap to them for knowing their history while giving it an out of the box twist. I'll see you at the Appomattox Court House. **The Goon**

Bukowski At Bellevue (Screen Edge)- Ignoring hip hop poetry slams and high profile spoken word tours, the purest and rawest form of poetry will always come from true American revolutionaries like Kerouac, Ginsberg, and Charles Bukowski. Unlike the aforementioned poets, Bukowski's career was inconsistent and unfocused. Recorded in 1970 at Bellevue University in Washington

State, this low quality film recording captures Bukowski in his middle-aged prime. The hour long DVD features him giving his two cents about being a slob, his rich father, and of course, lesbians. Any viewer will be able to appreciate the pain and adventure of a day in the life of Charles Bukowski. All hail the slacker God. **The Goon**

Murder City Devils Rock and Roll Won't Wait (MVD)- This is a very cool documentary on the sadly defunct band Murder City Devils. The video features and interviews—where the band describes themselves as "very drunk rock and roll"—live performances, tour footage, and other goodies chronicling life on the road as a rock and roll band in the early part of the new millennium. The usual "worst part of being in a band" complaints are made by all the band members—you know, not showering, not sleeping—but some of the live footage and antics are very fun to watch as is the commentary on why having tattoos is important. The bonus music videos are nothing spectacular, but fans of the band and of documentaries will enjoy this DVD. **Stephen Blackwell**



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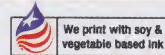
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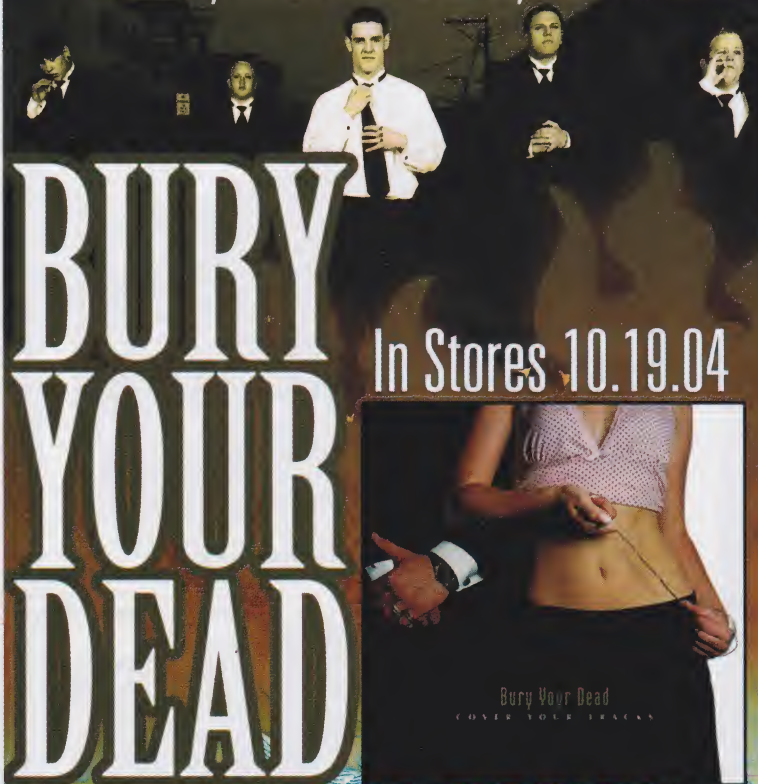
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RECORD REVIEWS

HEAD to HEAD 1

EIGHTEEN VISIONS vs. TWELVE TRIBES: A Numbers Battle

by Stan Horaczek



Name: Eighteen Visions

Album: *Obsession* (Epic)

Location: Huntington Beach, CA

Amount of Tambourine: Moderate

Type of girl you'll be able to hook up with after a conversation about this record: You've seen her at every metalcore show you've ever been to. She's emaciated and pale with the same black bob haircut that all the guys at metalcore shows have. She's got lots of t-shirts from urban outfitters and always has a bandana hanging out of her back pocket. She has tons of Myspace friends with the words "blood" and "lace" in their usernames.

The Goods: Fans of Eighteen Visions have every excuse to bang their neatly coiffed heads for this record as these boys continue to ride the success of the make-up laden rock and roll/metal sound that made them famous. The band has further distanced themselves from the traditional metal protocol by adding even more slow crooning and, gasp! a piano ballad. They know exactly what they're doing and exactly whom they're doing it for—hot girls who date hardcore boys.



Name: Twelve Tribes

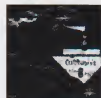
Album: *The Rebirth of Tragedy* (Ferret Music)

Location: Dayton, Ohio

Amount of Tambourine: None

Type of girl you'll be able to hook up with after a conversation about this record: She's not as skinny as the Eighteen Visions girl but in a fight she would dominate. She opts for black T-shirts and zip-up hoodies most of the time, and will probably have her nose pierced. She's not on Myspace, but she probably will be in a month or two.

The Goods: Aside from The Bronx, Twelve Tribes may be the least heavy band to be put out by New Jersey's Ferret Records. *The Rebirth of Tragedy* is a mostly mid-tempo metal full length with a mix of singing and screaming that, while dynamic, doesn't live up to bands like Killswitch Engage and God Forbid, who are doing it a lot better. This album really won't get you many girls, but at least it doesn't have any damn tambourine playing. Maybe if they change their name to Nineteen Tribes for the next record, they'll be able to earn a victory.



THE ACACIA STRAIN

3750

(Prosthetic)

My first experience with this band takes me back a few years when I attended the New England Metal and Hardcore festival. A friend of a friend recognized me and we began to chat and it came up that the only band he came to see was a local act called The Acacia Strain. My interest was piqued as I decided to check them out. Their live performance was lackluster to say the least. Their new record has the same effect. Of course this is heavy, and when I say heavy, I mean *heavy*! This album just plods along, bashing you from side to side as you wonder what the point is. In all fairness though, they play their music well which is something that most bands can't even do. **Ray Harkins**



THE ADICTS

Rollercoaster
(SOS)

The legendary Adicts return with another new album, and it's great! I promise! Of course, there are a couple of lemons here and there, but overall, this album shows the Dee brothers and singer, Monkey, in prime songwriting form. Simple, catchy, and very melodic choruses are the Adicts' trademark and it still shows, albeit with a little quieter feel—studies show one grows less punk with age. When cheeky power-pop played by some droogs and a punk rock mime is the order of the day, look no further than the Adicts for comfort. Viva

la Revolution! **The Turk**



AMANDA WOODWARD

La Decadence de La Decadence
(Level Plane)

When I initially thought of French hardcore, I imagined ultra-stylish kids with asymmetrical haircuts banging on keyboards while chain smoking. Fortunately, Amanda Woodward shatters all misconceptions of our former allies. They play a style of driving emotional hardcore on which Level Plane has all but cornered the market. Don't get turned off by that because they do it damn well. The vocals are full of urgency without being incoherent—unless you don't speak French, like me. The wandering guitar parts that recall Envy, combined with a few catchy riffs (see: "<<On>> est un con") keep me interested even though I have no idea what they're saying. Ignore the fact that the band takes its name from Heather Locklear's character on *Melrose Place*, and pick up this CD and a French-English dictionary post haste. **Melanie Payne**



AMBER PACIFIC

Fading Days
(Hopeless)

In the 17th century, genius minds like René Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Baruch Spinoza revolutionized philosophy for the succeeding centuries. Presenting new vantage points on issues like the nature of being and the nature of the universe,

their work is still relevant today in films like *The Matrix* and *The Truman Show*. But the central topic around which all these European thinkers revolved was that of the existence of God. They tried to establish God's attributes in nature and hoped to intellectually prove or disprove God's existence. 100 years of philosophical rabble-rousing was all for naught, because had they heard Amber Pacific, they would know the truth: There is no God. Want me to put it another way? If the whole "Joe Strummer is dead" thing were just a big misunderstanding and The Clash played a free show in Central Park and I was in the front row and Amber Pacific opened for them, I would leave. **John Brooks**



ANADIVINE

Zoo
(Militia Group)

Anadivine is not the most awful emo band in the world. However, there is absolutely nothing to distinguish them from the rest of the emo crowd, which is too bad. Listening to their album one gets the impression that if they knew anything about outside of broken hearts and breakups, they might just be a darn good punk band. Therein lies the problem with this well-worn genre: it's not always two-dimensional and bands tend to fall into the trap of settling for that. Well, it still sells albums, so why not? Anadivine represents squandered talent. All the songs on this album are listener-friendly, the drumming is tight and skilled, and the band plays well together, but it stops there, and that's just not enough to make a band special or interesting or

worthwhile. **John Brooks**



ANODYNE

Lifetime of Gray Skies
(Level Plane)

Thick, intense, and brutal music that defies easy categorization—Kiss It Goodbye would probably be the easiest comparison. Technical, speedy throbs of guitar work come in waves and reach some slow, doomish breaks interspersed here and there. Then things start to open up as some of their slower songs appear. Bravely they extend tracks to whatever length seems right—in the case of the mini-epic "Blood Meridian" it's just over six minutes of terse drum and noise anxiety. Sure it's metallic, but it's not metal, and in no way should this be confused with hardcore. Thankfully, the vocals vary in texture and never try to dominate the instrumental work that is by far the focal center of the record. This being the first that I've heard of Anodyne, it seems that this experimental side is a new direction for them. From the denseness of what they've created here, they could go in any direction. Merely letting it unravel (a la Cave In) would probably be interesting enough. Pay attention. **du proserpio**



THE ARSONS

Bridges Down
(Mad At The World)

Ernie Parada is one of those people who just seems to keep plugging away at it musically, since the days in Gilligan's Revenge (who turned into the great



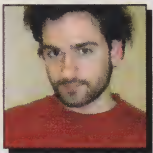
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NYHC band Token Entry). But since his last band, Grey Area, he's returned to the kit, leaving guitar for his original instrument, drums. Personally, I tried to like Grey Area but their two albums really never made much of a dent. The Arsons have much of the same melodic tendencies, but with a bit more depth. There's a definite Dag Nasty influence, especially in the vocals, but there's clearly an attempt to blend in some vicious old hardcore guitar, mostly in the style of Black Flag. Other times, they make me wonder what Hot Water Music would sound like with a singer who sang instead of screamed. Not bad overall, definitely something here for fans of the style. Each copy of this disc is hand-numbered out of 1000. **du proserpio**



ASOBI SEKSU

self-titled
 (Friendly Fire)

With the incessant hype and hairspray, it's hard to hear bands from NYC these days without feeling like you're being fed a premeditated fashion show. So when you see three shaggy-haired indie rockers fronted by a keyboard-playing Japanese woman, you wouldn't be surprised to hear a melodious dream-pop combination of lounge-sounding Stereolab and feedback blasts of My Bloody Valentine. What may surprise you is how well Asobi Seksu pulls it off. When they successfully combine their influences and adeptly manage tension and release it works remarkably well. Even the songs on here that fail to ignite are interesting enough, thanks to the band's irrepressible sense of melody. If it were 10 years ago, Asobi Seksu would've been all over the radio instead of Mazzy Star. Instead, catch them when they play your town for a surprisingly energetic live show. **Matt Tomich**



BAD WIZARD

#1 Tonite!
 (Howler)

The Hives recently appeared on the cover of *Spin* with a tagline that proclaimed them to be the best live band out there. Bullshit! Whoever came up with that one must have been too busy to come out and see Bad Wizard because they would have realized that they in fact are the best live band on the planet. With this, their third record, and first on their new label, Howler Records, Curtis and the gang bring it again with a balls out guitar attack that leaves no questions as to what this band's intentions are: Sex, drugs, and rock and roll excess! While the Bad Wizard live experience isn't quite captured here, this record comes pretty damn close. Every ripping solo sounds the way a cranked Les Paul is meant to and every howled word kicks your ass around. With bands carrying the rock moniker that have little or nothing to do with the Nuge or AC/DC it's great to see that Bad Wizard doesn't pull any punches. **Aaron Lefkove**



BATS & MICE

A Person Can Carry A Handmade... EP

To a proper indie rock star with proper indie cred you need at least one of the following: an ex-lead singer from a

credible indie band, an album title that makes no grammatical or literal sense, and some moving chord changes that step quickly aside for some crashing, bashing, and railing. Bats and Mice, made up of former Sleepytime Trio and Milemarker remnants (Ben Davis among the most prominent) is the kind of side project that should be pushed to the forefront. Five songs away from being a terrific album, this quick four song EP starts with a title track of angular jangling guitar jamming then finds armed force precision in "Military Smile," and deftly exits out the back with the great earnest chorus of "Even And Then Some" and the crooning vowels in "Around What's Done." For pseudo-satisfaction, just hit "repeat" on your CD player and act surprised. **Jon Stern**



BEEP BEEP

Business Casual
 (Saddle Creek)

The strangest thing about art is how completely subjective it is. One man's leftover turkey carcass with a bunch of colorful pipe cleaners stuck in it is another man's 21st century masterpiece. Beep Beep, the art rock band from Omaha with a hyperactive disorder, never quite convinces that disjointed, frenetic, and angry ever add up to interesting. A voice that sounds like a baby is being born via the vocal chords tells you to "Please eat the mints off your pillow." Before he has time to call room service he also asks for a nice angular guitar blip and sputter solo. When a funky organ solo broadsides you in the anxious "Misuse Their Bodies" plastered over a U2-like guitar staccato, your ears perk up. When melodic moments in a song like "Vertical Cougar" transcend the boring dissonance you half-smile. But, a weird album full of near misses neither sets the art world, nor the music world afire. **Jon Stern**



THE BELLES

Idle Acres
 (Second Nature)

You might have thought Second Nature was taking a break and folding up the label but they come back once again with a slew of new releases, all of which are staggering. The Belles are a two-piece from the Midwest that sound nothing like the White Stripes. Borrowing notes from Belle and Sebastian, Nick Drake, and Built To Spill, The Belles will stun you with their captivating song writing and pop sensibilities. I would immediately wretch and have an attention span that would last all of a song when it comes to this type of music, but in this case they held my interest to the very end. Coupled with an immaculate recording (courtesy of Ed Rose) and even more pristine packaging, you have something very special that will be hard to duplicate for years to come. **Ray Harkins**



THE BLOOD BROTHERS

Crimes
 (V2)

The Blood Brothers' fourth full length is frenetic, chaotic, and mostly unintelligible. *Crimes* retains much of The Blood Brothers' energy, yet displays broader musical ability, with deviations

into the melodic ("Rats and Rats and Rats for Candy" and "Crimes"). There is still plenty of screaming, moaning, cursing, and distortion, but the songs are more accessible. A chorus is even detectable in "Love Is A Hideous Car Wreck." The harmony of singers Jordan Billie and Johnny Whitney, while characteristically antagonistic, ranges to almost soothing—think Mates of State's schizophrenic cousin. The background of this album is the most interesting part, dispersed with odd and eerie noises, urgent instrumentals, and ghoulish background vocals. Despite their growth, The Blood Brothers create plenty of noise and energy, but not a lot of sense. It's more a messy venture into the macabre than a coherent musical entity. If you're looking for some pure disorder to ram around to in reckless abandon, this is it. If you're looking for an album with more substance than style, keep searching. **Amy Schuster**



BLOOD FOR BLOOD

Serenity
(Thorp)

Although a new Blood For Blood record usually has certain guarantees with regards to sound, this record is a bit of a change for this band. "Hanging On The Corner (The Charlestown Song)" is surprisingly full of backup choruses, whoa-whoas, heys, and so on. It makes me wonder if anyone in Charlestown is scratching their head at the more melodic, upbeat tinges shown here. After all the darkness and brutality associated with this band, they're showing up with a more positive attitude and a melodic second vocalist which will be considered a bit suspect by some. That said, there's a pretty evident pacing on this record that their older material lacked—they keep the speed up most of the time and even the more hardcore of the material still reflects that churning pace. Del Shannon's "Runaway" also shows up in heavy punk form which is either a confused choice or a shocking display of skill, depending on where you're sitting. There's the usual mix of "the streets are so cold" and "don't fool yourself" lyrics, which is the firmest connection between this and the band of old. I am pretty thrown off by this direction from the hardest act out of Boston. For all of Blood For Blood's trumpeting of tragedy as it appears in their lives, this is perhaps the first time that it appears as a novelty. **du proserpio**



THE BRIGGS

Leaving The Ways EP
(SideOne Dummy)

The Briggs blend melodic riot-inciting streetpunk is in the vein of Cock Sparrer, Sham 69, The Business and even newer influences like U.S. Bombs and The Casualties. The sound goes from melodic to chaotic at the drop of a hat (or liberty spike, in this case) that recalls Ex-Side One alum, Madcap. Joe Gittleman of the Mighty Mighty Bosstones lends his production mastery to deliver an assortment of anthems, street pandemonium, and even a reggae song. There's no filler on this album so switch the soccer game to mute, throw this on, and start a war on the terraces. **The Goon**



NICK CAVE & THE BAD SEEDS

Abattoir Blues/The Lyre...
(Mute)

In the tradition of Tom Waits and Guns 'N Roses, Nick Cave and his Bad Seeds are releasing their next two albums simultaneously. While the albums are indeed two separate entities, they have continuity to them that showcases shades of Cave's entire career. *Abattoir Blues* begins with a handful of songs that are as stripped down and punky as anything The Birthday Party ever released. The album slowly segues into the more gospel influenced rockers that had characterized the Bad Seeds' later work. *The Lyre of Orpheus* opens with a title track that is a vibrant in its narration as spooky in its instrumentation. The album relies on more stripped down songs and folky arrangements and showcase an opposite to *Abattoir's* gospel-soul take. Cave's voice has always been his most remarkable talent and is unmistakable. Both albums sound great and with Cave reaching the twilight of his 20-plus year career he shows no signs of burning out or fading away anytime soon. **Aaron Lefkove**



THE CHINESE STARS

A Rare Sensation
(Three One G)

With ex-members of art-punks Arab On Radar and Six Finger Satellite on board, you'd think that The Chinese Stars could come up with something a little more compelling than *A Rare Sensation*. Despite their promising debut EP (2003's *Turbo Mattress*), the Rhode Island quartet's first full length is made up of nine indistinguishable tracks of worn-out disco-beat dancepunk. While there may be a redeeming nugget or two (like "Dressed To Get Blessed"), the disc is largely bloated with swishy hi-hats, repetitive basslines, static tempos, and near-vexing histrionic vocals—although lecherous lyrics like "I need life insurance on my zipper/ To keep you out of my pants" provide some amusement. In the end, you're better off getting on the dance floor with something by Gang of Four, The Rapture, or !!! **Tracey John**



CIRCLES OVER SIDELIGHTS

...On Becoming A Person
(Immigrant Sun)

Immigrant Sun seems to find the most random bands out of the middle of nowhere and some of them are actually very good. They scored a gem from New Jersey in the form of the band called With Resistance and now from Ohio we have Circles Over Sidelights. The word of mouth buzz may not be fully merited, but regardless a good effort is put forth. Drawing inspiration from bands like Converge and Zao, Circles Over Sidelights have a somewhat generic take on this worn down scene but the energy exuded keeps things interesting. It retains a feel throughout that sounds as if they did not have enough time to finish the album how they would have liked, but some how made ends meet. Who said being held over the barrel was a bad thing? **Ray Harkins**

Lance Romance of The Briefs

Everybody is familiar with our Attorney General John Ashcroft, at least I hope they are. If you're feeling down because your civil rights have been violated, or you might be spending time in a jail far away for no reason at all, don't worry, Mr. Ashcroft has been spending a lot of his free time fine tuning his singing career. Here's the top ten songs he's been practicing. Rumor has it he will be debuting them at the Republican Convention.

1. **The Kids** "Don't Wanna Be A Fat Boy" > By a bunch a punk kids from Belgium. Little did they know their song would touch the heart of one young shy kid who never had much luck with the ladies. Now we all pay...thanks.
2. **Iggy Pop** "I'm a Conservative" > From the album *Soldier*. I'm sure this will be a crowd pleaser.
3. **The Damned** "Stab Your Back" > It was a tough choice, this one or "Born To Kill." Both apply to Johnny...he didn't get where he is today by being a nice guy. From the best Damned record and the first punk record ever!
4. **Rik L. Rik** "Mercenaries" > "Kill for pay / Die that way" One of my favorites, but only when Rik sings it
5. **The Ramones** "We're a Happy Family" > You've got to include The Ramones in everything you do in your everyday life, even if you're Satan.
6. **Spizz Energi** "Where's Captain Kirk?" > This one will lighten everybody up a bit and also confirm the rumors about Ashcroft being a huge Trekie.
7. **La Peste** "Better Off Dead" > The Boston contingent will be happy. Well, at least the cool ones.
8. **Dead Kennedys** "Kill The Poor" > Anyday now....
9. **Circle Jerks** "I Just Want Some Skank" > Even fat boys need lovin' too...
10. **The Professionals** "Join The Professionals" > Big closer. The crowd goes wild and throws tons of money. Steve Jones and Paul Cook would be proud.

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FEATURED REVIEW: THE MUFFS



Album: *Really Really Happy* (Five Foot Two)

The Goods: Didn't these gals used to be a pop-punk band in the vein of The Ramones or their Mexican counterparts The Zeros who they notably covered? Far from being a middle of the road record, the latest Muffs album veers more pop than punk this time around. The album has a countrified feel to it but the requisite harmonies and hooks are still there. At least they haven't gone glam metal like their former band, The Pandoras, and they still have one of the coolest names out there. **Aaron Lefkove**

Kim Shattuck of The Muffs' Ten Bands Whose Names Are Sexual Innuendos

1. **The Breeders** - A clever pregnancy reference.
2. **Sex Pistols** - The weiner.
3. **X Ray Spex** - Ya know, seeing through people's clothes.
4. **The Dickies** - Hmmm, well maybe?
5. **Hole** - The vagina, duh!
6. **Queen** - A gay reference.
7. **AC/DC** - Swinging both ways.
8. **Badfinger** - Why would the finger be bad?
9. **The Kinks** - Cute innuendo, kinky.
10. **Ween** - A sucking-the-titty reference.



CONVERGE

You Fail Me
(Epitaph)

Converge's Epitaph debut is something of a shocker. Gone is the hyperkinetic, machinegun-like precision of their previous work, *Jane Doe*. Sure, the band tears your head off in the way you've come to expect (see "Eagles Become Vultures"), but there are some noticeable changes here that see them pushing well past their contemporaries in the late-'90's Boston scene, and into the creative territory of aggressive art-rock giants Voivod, Shellac, and Neurosis. For starters, it is the drums not the guitars, that really shine on *You Fail Me*. Ben Koller's drumming stands up to that of the skinsmen in The Dillinger Escape Plan and Burnt By The Sun. Meanwhile, guitarist Kurt Ballou takes this opportunity to halt his trademark, bludgeoning screech in lieu of a more atmospheric and simple wail. The songs are no less frenetic than on past efforts, they just show the band moving away from their teenage metal roots and into the guise of a more mature, older rock and roll outfit. **Ross Siegel**



CRIME

San Francisco's Still Doomed
(Swami)

One of San Francisco punk's originators, Crime—the band who once described the Ramones to Sire Records head Seymour Stein as "a bunch of hippies that need to get haircuts"—get an updated discography. With the recent '77-punk revival, this was bound to happen. The music isn't pretty and it isn't easy to listen to. It's raw rough around the edges and makes no bones about it. "Murder By Guitar" and "Hot Wire My Heart" have gone on to become underground standards in all their feedback and static drenched glory. The band spearheaded many movements in San Francisco's gay and punk (and gay punk?) communities dressed in full SFPD regalia and thus earned a nasty reputation that had them blackballed by both the mainstream and underground community. With a few near-impossible-to-find releases and a slew of crappy bootlegs circulating this release punk enthusiasts will be ecstatic over this release. Their motto: "San Francisco's first and only rock band!" **Aaron Lefkove**



DAS OATH

Self-titled
(Dim Mak)

There are times when I wonder whether this band plays some brilliant kind of art music that goes right over my head or if the whole thing is just a big inside joke that I haven't read enough about to understand. Das Oath's self titled release plays like one half-hour long song that switches back and forth between grind and fast hardcore, with some crazy and rather irritating noises thrown in. The song titles, which include gems like "Awesome Rape" and "A Bigot Is A Spic," don't really go much beyond the boundaries of standard grind/shock titles. The fact that half of the members of this band are from New York and the other half are from The Netherlands only suggests that The Netherlands is an

even weirder place than I had previously believed. The bottom line on this record is that I don't get it and I'm not about to put any time into trying to get it. If you like minute long grind songs with short hardcore parts and long periods of silly guitar noise then you've just hit the jackpot. **Stan Horaczek**



DEAD TO FALL

Now Here Fast
(Victory)

Like a lot of "metalcore" bands nowadays, the sophomore disc from Dead To Fall is packed with the requisite throbbing double bass, harmonic twin guitar attacks, and low-toned, guttural growls. But while the Chicago quintet's Nordic-influenced sound doesn't break the metalcore mold, you have to ask: does it really need to? If you've got a soft spot for melodic death metal-inspired riffs, glorious thrash parts, and annihilating breakdowns, *Villainy & Virtue* will help fill the void until As I Lay Dying or Darkest Hour's next album hits. **Tracey John**



DEATH THREAT

Now Here Fast
(Triple Crown)

There are few other newer bands around these days that get as much respect in the hardcore scene as Death Threat. It might be because they still play fast or it might be because their lyrics are mostly about being loyal to your friends and your crew. Either way, *Now Here Fast* is sure to please even the toughest hardcore veterans. Those of you looking for something new or experimental are in the wrong place, and if you don't leave you'll probably get your ass kicked. The name of the band is Death Threat, with that you should be able to tell whether or not you're going to be into this. **Stan Horaczek**



THE DILLINGER ESCAPE PLAN

Miss Machine
(Relapse)

There are two kinds of people, those who appreciate what this band does, and those who don't. I'm not a huge fan of tech metal, but The Dillinger Escape Plan are one of the best bands on the planet. Their records are non-stop and their live show might just catch you on fire if you quit paying attention. *Miss Machine* is packed full of all of the fury and technical mastery that's made this band what it is. Frontman Greg Puciato further proves that he has vocal muscles to match his biceps and the rest of the band sound like they've been spending more time in the practice room than a little Asian girl and her violin. This album isn't just tech metal though, strewn about are jazz breaks, style changes, and some downright crazy sounds that make this a completely killer piece of material. I got this for free but I'm going to end up buying the limited vinyl and special DVD just because there's a good chance that this is going to end up being a classic when the rest of the world realizes just how good these guys truly are. One of the best records of the year. **Stan Horaczek**

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**DON'T LOOK DOWN***The Fear In Love*
(Nitro)

Instead of ripping Don't Look Down for sounding like every other pop punk band from past four years, I'm going to give them points for finding a better band to replicate. The Jersey-based quartet has progressed from the formulaic, sugary sounds of *The Starting Line*—which many bands have made their own over the past few years—to the layered, metal/hardcore style of *Thrice*. Despite showing a few more influences, Don't Look Down has managed to maintain the pop overtones they've had for the past six years. Based on this album, I can only conclude that in the upcoming years, young girls everywhere will be trading in their gimmicky t-shirts and black glasses for spiked wristbands and uncleanness, as metal becomes pop. **Matt Neatock**

**ENDICOTT***The Words In Ink Don't Lie*
(Equal Vision)

I read on the Internet that this album is about an abduction, told from the point of view of the abductor, the abducted, and the abducted's family. In spite of its creepy concept, with creepy song titles ("Ransom Note," "One Bleeding To Death," "Holding Cell"), this is an excellent album. Granted, screaming over erratic guitar arrangements is all the rage these days, Endicott comes off sounding slightly more polished than the rest, while throwing in some catchy hooks and gang choruses. This album is definitely worth a listen before you decide whether its artsy dudes exploring their macabre side, a solid hardcore effort, or just the same old crap in blood-spattered packaging. **Matt Neatock**

**ENTOMBED***Inferno/Averno*
(Treeman)

At the risk of coming under fire from diehards, I must say this is the weakest Entombed release to date. While the band has been edging away from their thrash roots and more towards garage-metal with every release since *Left Hand Path*, they reached a happy medium a few years back and over shot it by, oh say, a mile or so. The results are mediocre. Ever since the departure of Nicke Andersson the band has been on a continual downward slope and Andersson's post-Entombed work just seems to be much more interesting. For hardcore Entombed fans only. **Aaron Lefkove**

*Rose City Hard Core*
(Blackout!)

If it's true that art (or music, in this case) imitates life, then it's fair to assume that Portland, OR is a grim place. From the album's dense industrial cover art to lyrics like "if pain makes you stronger then I'm fucking bulletproof," this album is a tenacious and un-compromised assault from a band that has had it up to their ears. The Escaped is that dirty hardcore that you hear echoing from

DIY shows and basements. There is nothing witty or trendy about their Warzone inspired guitar sound and their dual vocalist onslaught and they don't capture some old school retro hardcore sound only to re-institute it half-heartedly. The songs are steadfast odes to personal anguish and vows to overcome dead-end situations. Trendy hardcore proponents beware, The Escaped is on the prowl with enough blood, sweat, and tears to wash your eye-lined faces clean.

Frankie Corva**EVER WE FALL***Endura EP*
(Rise)

Sometimes there is no challenge when guessing what a particular band will sound like based on their cover art and/or band name. For Ever We Fall we know that they will probably sound like a combination of Further Seems Forever and Thursday based on the sheer look of the record. Jackpot! Granted we could be hearing this band at their greatest moment (in the studio) but I can see a large check coming their direction if they play their cards right. Very solidly executed indie rock that can easily please all walks of life. The recording is thick and compliments the music almost flawlessly. The originality factor might be low but for a debut EP, this is solid. **Ray Harkins**

**THE EVERYONES**self-titled
(Tee Pee)

Here's a pleasant surprise from the land down under. Australia's The Everyones write strident pop songs that have more in common with UK rockers like Muse and Ash than the annoying hipster rock provided by their "mates" Jet. Jet really suck. Anyway, the songs on this self-titled full length are bleak, distant, and not entirely predictable. However, there is nothing too catchy on here, and we all know a good hook can really help five minute droning pop songs; just ask Kevin Shields. The Everyones are a cool, unconventional band, but their full length doesn't grab you and shake the piss out of you like you'd want it to. **Stephen Blackwell**

**THE EXIT***Home For An Island*
(Some)

The more this album gets spun, the more we're missing The Exit's fiery, wide-eyed *Some* debut *New Beat*. Where did all those raucous, Police-inspired reggae and Clash-esque punk anthems go? What's with this long[er]-winded collection of cuts? On its own, this is undoubtedly worth its weight—resoundingly listenable and musically substantial with comforting, mellifluous vocals—particularly compared to the legions of discombobulated faux punk acts that've infiltrated America's airwaves. But wedged up against the band's earlier efforts, and there's this sudden loss of edge and youthfulness that's been pawned for a couple doses of waning maturity and introspection. Still, it's a recommended listen and a welcomed effort. **Waleed Rashidi**

FEATURED REVIEW:
LIARS ACADEMY**Album: Demons** (Equal Vision)

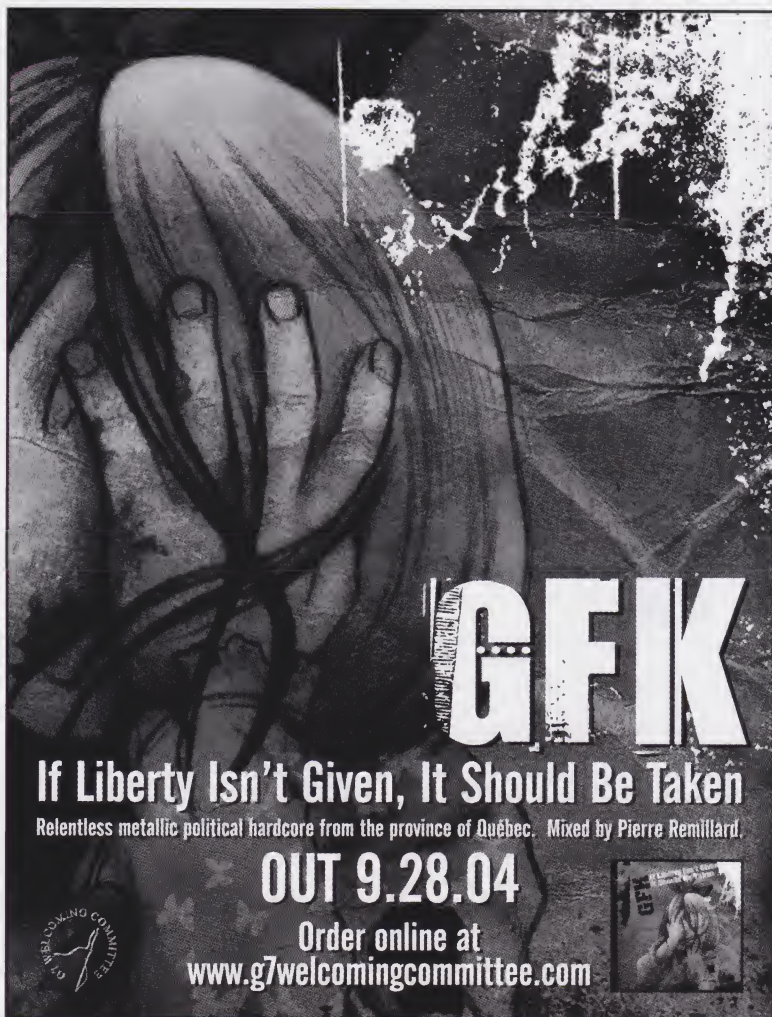
The Goods: It's a shame when good bands get swept under the rug by the music industry powers that be. Obviously, not all bands garner the same attention from the press as others, but from time to time you would like to see a bone thrown to the underdog. Liars Academy is the epitome of underdogs. Featuring a frontman who used to sing for the severely underrated Cross My Heart, their newest effort is a great record that appeals to those who still consider mid-tempo alternative like they played on college radio in 1993 indie rock and not emo. Liars Academy would have thrived during the mid-to-late-'90's, but unfortunately these days if your band forgets to invite a vocalist who can both sing and scream to practice then you can kiss the cover of *Law of Inertia* goodbye. The production here is crisp, the songs are catchy, and above all, it sounds like this is the record they have been trying to create for years. Hopefully *Demons* will not go overlooked as it deserves everyone's full attention. **Ray Harkins**

Fred Fritz of Liars Academy's Top Three New Releases (In no particular order)

Sloan Action Pact (Vik) > This is a super catchy rock record from one of the most underrated bands in the music business right now. Be sure to pick this up!

The Hellcopters By The Grace of God (Liquor & Poker) > Great classic rock record that just makes you feel cooler than you really are. I would highly recommend this to anyone who's ever gotten caught playing air guitar to his or her Thin Lizzy Records.

Codeseven Dancing Echoes/Dead Sounds (Equal Vision) > If you ever find yourself wondering what would've happened if Sunny Day Real Estate had helped Vangelis write the soundtrack to *Blade Runner*, this is as close as you are going to come to what the outcome might have been. A very haunting and beautiful record.



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HEAD to HEAD 2

SAHARA HOTNIGHTS vs. WHIRLWIND HEAT: Hot or Not?

by Aaron Lefkove



Name: Sahara Hotnights
Album: *Kiss & Tell* (RCA)
Location: Sweden

Hot or Not: Four totally babetacular Swedes + rocking tunes = hot!

The Goods: Sweden's favorite Runaways-esque band returns with a brand spankin' new full length. Hot off the heels of tours with The Hives and some of rock's other upper echelon, the girls crank out a handful of tunes about boys, boys, and, well, boys. While many have scoffed at the Hotnights as a mere gimmick they prove here that they can lay it down just as good if not better than most of the other so-called "rock" bands out there. Oh, Kim Fowley, where are you?



Name: Whirlwind Heat
Album: *Flamingo Honey* (Dim Mak)
Location: Grand Rapids, Michigan

Hot or Not: Three skinny indie rock dudes + Michigan winters = pasty!

The Goods: Whirlwind Heat create a whirlwind of otherworldly sounds with their latest effort. The band leaves nothing to be desired with their instrumentation, and adhere to their standard left-of-center catchy music that is too wacky to be pop and too poppy to be considered avant-garde. Seriously though, going up against those baberific Swedes is a tough task, and no matter how many whizzing keyboards are in the mix there is something to be said for the Hotnights and their odes to Joan Jett.



THE FAINT

Wet From Birth
(Saddle Creek)

In recent memory, few records have been subject to as much anticipation as *Wet From Birth*. Everyone knows the story by now; five guys from the thriving Omaha, NE scene in a shitty Cure rip-off band purchased a fog machine, broke out the keyboards, and wrote the genre-defining *Danse Macabre* which ultimately received a facelift from the world's premiere DJ's in 2003. Arguably the most hyped band on Saddle Creek (and there are quite a few of them), The Faint had a lot to live up to. Good thing they've made a record that delivers, although perhaps not exactly how you would expect. For starters, they've added a string section and were not afraid to introduce the album with it. Rhythmically, the songs are consistently good, but the huge hooks on *Macabre*'s "Glass Danse World" and "Agenda Suicide" are long gone, having been replaced with quirkiness, various sound effects, and rock guitars. Not as immediate as their prior release, but equally as good.

Stephen Blackwell



THE FALL

The Real New Fall LP
(Narnack)

After nearly six years without so much as a phone call, the legendary proto-punk band with the prophetic lead singer has returned with an album that is sonically rooted in the Reagan years. Of course, Reagan's kicked...so very little chance for a third term resurgence of skinny ties and new Coke. Take a meander through "Mountain," a strolling synth line cuts through the track like a Casio river. Sparta #2 kind of puts its studded boot up your ass with a British sneer, some brash guitars, and plenty of piping up from the band. Although Robert Smith

is still around, and the longevity of The Cure is still being felt, a song like "Mad Mock Goth" with a circular three-chord rant isn't much of a threat. Even decades later The Fall don't sound like they've so much as tripped. **Jon Stern**



FALL OUT BOY

My Heart Will Always Be...
(Fueled By Ramen)

A congratulatory hand must be dealt to pop-punk mavens Fall Out Boy. They have successfully plodded through a thickly vegetated scene with a noteworthy slash of the machete—enough to find themselves as the underground's sparkling heroes with faces plastered inside the locker doors of many high school hallways. These former hardcore harlots now reside safely in the melodic realm and this Fueled By Ramen-released EP features nimble, acoustic versions of the band's originals, plus a brave but unnerving rendition of Joy Division's "Love Will Tear Us Apart." It's not an essential disc, but offers a complementary tangent to the band's plugged-in-and-slammed standard fare. What is worth the green, however, is the accompanying DVD, featuring a well-assembled documentary on the act, spotlighting their chronology, van crashes, and backstage fodder, interspersed with witty testimonials from the members. That's a must-have for even the remotely associated fan.

Waleed Rashidi

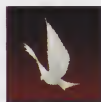


THE FLESH

Sweet Defeat EP
(Gern Blandsten)

Imagine, if you will, a Gang of Four-influenced electro dance band from Brooklyn. No, wait, you say there's already a shitload? Well what makes The Flesh any different? Two words:

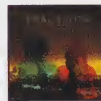
unpretentious and fun. Imagine the manic camp energy of the World/Inferno Friendship Society fronted by Richard Hell and backed by guitars and keyboard sounds ranging from a farfisa organ to a DX-7 straight out of the Ghostbusters soundtrack. Sing along to the choruses while you're at it, because everybody else in the band is. Half the songs on this are either good or near-great, but these guys are just one mix tape-worthy song away from pushing it over the top. This EP is only a teaser—we have to wait until later this year to see if they end up pulling it off. **Matt Tomich**



FLOOR

Dove
(No Idea)

This is the final release from the now-defunct Floor and boy is it punishing! Originally recorded in 1994, this lost album hasn't seen the light of day since it was tracked and is now being released in the wake of the band's break-up. At seven songs and just as many riffs, the record clocks in at just under an hour of droning instrumental meanderings that will satisfy the Melvins/ISIS/Neurosis set. While the album may not go anywhere—the band wails on the same three riffs for the majority of the record—the mood it sets is good for any or all of the following: falling asleep, decapitating peasants, skinning a live goat, or just cleaning the house. Even without a bass player, the band hits hard below the belt with their tuned-down mayhem. Buy this and prepare for some ungodly, ear-shattering noise. **Aaron Lefkove**



FRAUSDOTS

Couture, Couture, Couture
(Sub Pop)

Before everyone decides that they want off this post-punk revival train, the Los

Angeles duo of Brent Rademaker and Michelle Loisel (otherwise known as Frausdots) has an album they think you should listen to. For fans of the genre, simply think back to when you first heard Echo & The Bunnymen's *The Killing Moon* or The Church's *Under The Milky Way*. Okay, appropriately nostalgic, yet? Now, just imagine an entire album that gives you those kinds of chills and it's likely that this is what you'd end up with. Although borrowing heavily from seminal '80's new wave bands like New Order and The Cure, Frausdots really do give their own spin on the type of music that used to saturate the soundtracks of many a John Hughes film. Filled with echoing and resonant guitars and unexpectedly poignant keyboards, it's the haunting vocals of Rademaker and backup harmonies of Loisel that stand out throughout their strangely upbeat, yet undeniably melancholy debut. **Dean Ramos**



FURTHER SEEMS FOREVER

Hide Nothing
(Tooth and Nail)

Florida's Further Seems Forever are fantastic at generating a buzz using every means possible other than the quality of their music. Sure they play well and mix radio-friendly pop with a more breezy indie rock sound, but let's face it: their singers are the real show and the real story. From their first record, *The Moon Is Down*, which sold bazillions of copies due to their ex-frontman's success with his other project, Dashboard Confessional; to their next effort—an emo version of Jeff Buckley's *Grace*—with a recently departed mouthpiece; to this highly anticipated release featuring Jonathan Bunch, formerly of Sense Field on vocals. Nevertheless, *Hide Nothing* suffers the same fate as so many Sense Field recordings: great melodies, stunning dynamics, and nothing to really

PIG DESTROYER vs. CATTLE DECAPITATION: Barnyard Terror

by Aaron Lefkove



Name: Pig Destroyer

Album: *Terrifyer* (Relapse)

Location: Washington, D.C.

(Ex) Members of: Pig Destroyer's Scott Hull is also the guitarist and main songwriter for Agoraphobic Nosebleed. JR Hayes also makes occasional vocal contributions to Agoraphobic Nosebleed recordings.

Cover Art: Tits!

Most Disgusting Song Title: "Boy Constrictor"

The Goods: Stepping away from the electro-grindcore genre that they have perfected with their other band, Agoraphobic Nosebleed, and opting for a more straight ahead grindcore sound. Hull and Pig Destroyer lay it down with a handful of tracks that run the gamut from fast and pulverizing to faster and more pulverizing. While Pig Destroyer beats out Cattle Decapitation in the "Name" category, they lose points due to less creative cover art, sub-par song titles (I mean, how can you beat "Bukkake Tsunami" and "Lips And Asshole"?), and not sharing members with grindcore kings The Locust.



Name: Cattle Decapitation

Album: *Humanure* (Metal Blade)

Location: Southern California

(Ex) Members of: David Astor, Gabe Serbian, Justin Pearson, and Robert Bray of hipster grindcore act The Locust have all contributed on and off to Cattle Decapitation.

Cover Art: A bovine creature defecating out human shaped cow-pies. Very metal.

Most Disgusting Song Title: "Bukkake Tsunami"

The Goods: Once residing on Justin of The Locust's Three One G Records, Cattle Decapitation more than live up to their name with their current home on the label that brought the world Canibal Corpse (and Slayer). They make music to behead cattle to. While Pig Destroyer takes it in the "Name" competition, Cattle Decapitation slays in pretty much everything else. The skull-crushing blast beats annihilate listeners' brains. This is music to piss your parents off. While Pig Destroyer's cover art (breasts) comes off as trite, Cattle Decapitation takes a bit of a more avant-garde approach with their human shaped feces design.

sink your teeth into—as soon as the song ends the listener completely forgets what it sounded like. This isn't a bad record, it just doesn't make me swoon like that Dashboard guy... or the Jeff Buckley wannabe. **Ross Siegel**



GATSBY'S AMERICAN DREAM

In The Land of... EP
(LLR)

Gatsby's American Dream may be just be too darn talented for their own good. It's the curse of the musical geeks—and with a name that references F. Scott Fitzgerald, you can be sure you're dealing with geeks—who spend so much time paying attention to form and honoring their influences ('80's new wave and Elvis Costello) that they forget to actually rock amidst all the roll. Everything about their latest EP makes me want to love it, but after a few listens, I find myself focusing only on a few key tracks, namely "Red, Red, Blue" and "The Dragon of Pendor." The rest of the songs just refuse to come to life, despite all the craft and musicianship that went in to making them. Listening to this is like looking at a color photocopy of the Mona Lisa: sure, you can appreciate the genius of the art, but it's hard to really feel anything. Gatsby's already has a pretty loyal following, and I'm sure they're not in jeopardy of losing fans. I would just rather they trusted themselves enough to let go and let the music take control. Elvis Costello wouldn't have it any other way. **John Brooks**



THE GREAT REDNECK HOPE

Behold The Fuck Thunder
(Thinker Thought)

Really long song titles that make no sense, blazing fast grindcore that is as manic as it is depraved, and the fact that this CD was recorded by Kurt Ballou at

God City recording studio, make this band the eager younger brother of Converge. Next CD let's just hope they do something to set themselves apart. **Ross Siegel**



GREEN DAY

American Idiot
(Reprise)

After existing as a band for 15 years, selling millions upon millions of records across the world, and releasing seven albums, Green Day have never been regarded as a cornerstone of rock music. This, their first studio effort in nearly four years, can and will change that. There has always been a quirky, underdog aspect to Green Day that has undoubtedly made the band approachable, yet at the same time somewhat recyclable. This time around, singer/songwriter Billie Joe Armstrong has abandoned the self-effacing, tongue-in-cheek lyrics and has put together one hell of a social commentary, especially on "Jesus of Suburbia" and "Are We The Waiting." The album is nearly an hour long, boasting pianos, xylophones, nine-minute songs, and everything else you would never expect from a Green Day record. Quite honestly, there's not one minute of music on here that doesn't matter and *American Idiot* may very well be our generation's *Pet Sounds*. Do not let this one slip past your ears. **Stephen Blackwell**



GUTTERMOUTH

Eat Your Face
(Volcom)

These So Cal punks are back with an album that attempts to travel the same route as NOFX's *The War On Errorism*, but falls utterly short. It's a healthy dose of jaded political rhetoric meets middle school boys' room humor. There's

something unconvincing about a song that takes a stand against American imperialism when a song about killing a baby precedes it. While tracks like, "The Next Faux Mohican" are amusing in their mockery of hipster hair-dos and trendy screamo bands, they are too few and far between to salvage the album as a whole. For a clearer perspective on this record, think the sarcasm of The Offspring's Dexter Holland meets the rhythm section of Pennywise and then think about the last time you really cared about either of those bands. **Frank Corva**



HALFACRE GUNROOM

Wrecked
(Icarus)

Admittedly, when going through the track listing of Halfacre Gunroom's debut full-length and coming across a number entitled "Dirty Yankee Punk Rock Girl #2," it's hard not to have a few preconceived notions of what the album is likely to sound like, at least if you live above the Mason-Dixon line. While not entirely off the mark, it's probably pretty safe to say that if you're not a fan of country/southern alt-rock, this album's not going to make you one. While technically adequate, it's the subject matter and the vocals of frontman/guitarist Bryan Hartley that's likely to turn listeners away. Uncompromisingly masculine in his delivery, Hartley can mistakenly come off as unbearably macho, which is especially evident on tracks like "Car Date" and "The Day Is Done." On acoustic numbers, however, or more traditionally country/western tracks like "Lorna" and "The Wheels Rolled North," Halfacre Gunroom really find their groove and Hartley's voice shines without sounding as if he had just come from a monster truck show. In any event, it seems unlikely that *Wrecked* is going to expand the band's fan base

much. Those who've often used the word "Yankee" when referring to out-of-towners will wonder where this album's been all their lives. **Dean Ramos**



HANALEI

We Are All Natural Disasters
(Thick)

As Hanalei, Brian Moss (better known as frontman for punk rock outfit The Ghost) creates some exceptionally beautiful electronic folk rock. Together with cool beats and subtly moving guitars, Moss evokes a sincerity that is neither over the top or completely inert as many of his folksy contemporaries are known for being. Although many of these songs are pretty guitar-driven, "Josh And Sarah's Belated Wedding Present" has to be the one that stands out the most with a striking similarity to Pete Townshend's "Let My Love Open The Door." Besides his ability to combine both traditional and non-traditional rock and roll tools, Moss' greatest strength is as a storyteller. "This Is Going To Be The Best Summer Ever" delivers what it says lyrically, without being overly fervent or sentimental, while "Anza Ninety Three" is a heartfelt ode to one's first big heartbreak, bringing back all those awkward and heart wrenching feelings. It's "John Hughes Endings," though, that paints the most vivid pictures, telling the story of two desperately lonely people who finally meet each other among the pretenses of a hipster bar. It's fair to say that whatever direction The Ghost is heading in, as Hanalei, Moss' future as a musician is relatively secure. **Dean Ramos**



HANOVER SAINTS

Blood, Guts, and Glory EP
(Strike First)

Hanover Saints is the west coast's response to Hot Water Music. Though

FEATURED BAND: SENSES FAIL



WHAT'S IN BUDDY NIELSEN'S IPOD?

- "Rapture" by **Pedro The Lion**
- "Bury White" by **Far**
- "Mother Mary" by **Far**
- "Sweet Avenue" by **Jets To Brazil**
- "Sea Anemone" by **Jets To Brazil**
- "Chinatown" by **Jets To Brazil**
- "Jet Black" **Jawbreaker**
- "Naked As We Came" **Iron and Wine**
- "Puritan" by **Hatebreed**
- "Love American" by **Give Up The Ghost**
- "Some Came Running" by **Bane**
- "Hello Dearest Love" by **Appleseed Cast**
- "The Good That Won't Come Out" by **Rilo Kiley**
- "Nothing Feels Good" by **The Promise Ring**
- "Blizzard Of '77" by **Nada Surf**

not quite as raw and impassioned, the seven songs on this EP are credible accounts of melodic hardcore, rooted in a street punk ethic. Tracks such as "Headshot" rely heavily on gang vocals and driving three chord riffs and evoke the spirit of Sick Of It All circa *Blood, Sweat, and No Tears*. The picked out verses and balls-to-the-wall choruses of "Masquerade" call to mind Hot Water's later material. While the album is safe in the sense that it doesn't push the vision of its inspirations, it's thick production still sets it apart from being just another imitation of popular acts. **Frankie Corva**



THE HENTCHMEN

Form Follow Function
(Times Beach)

The Hentchmen play classic-sounding '60's garage in the *Nuggets* vein, thankfully with far better recording than most of their influences. There's a lot of clear, surf-style guitar tones in the trio's sound, which interestingly consists of Farfisa organ, guitar, and drums only. Somehow the organ is so integrated in the mix that it sounds more like a minimal bass than a keyboard most of the time. Apparently this act has toured far and beyond most of the garage acts that have been around in the past decade or so. Chances are, it's taught them how to keep things fresh and energetic. It's not the most inventive garage rock I've ever heard, but that's never been the point of the style. They keep things moving without ripping off all the obvious acts and sound fun while at it. Extra kudos for the track, "Cars On Film", which calls out loads of classic car chase films— "Gone in 60 Seconds...not the remake!" **du proserpio**



HOT CROSS

Fair Trades And Farewells EP
(Level Plane)

The term EP is being thrown around rather liberally these days. Some bands are putting out EPs that barely take up the first side of a limited edition, colored vinyl seven-inch record. This release hovers right around 20 minutes, which is enough time for me to listen to three of my other EPs and then drink a diet soda. Hot Cross has been enjoying the wave of screamo popularity with their last full length being hailed by many as one of the best of the genre's albums to date. This new six-song release follows up where that full length left off. All of the same squeaky guitars, talk/scream vocals, and swishy drum beats have been carried over to this release, which is sure to keep people who know the difference between emo and pop punk happy for a while. This kind of music really has a built in audience and I'll be interested to see if it stays popular in the long run. **Stan Horaczek**



HOT ROD CIRCUIT

Reality's Coming Through
(Vagrant)

After perusing a gaggle of immature, ostentatious emo albums, one begins to appreciate the sheer professionalism of Vagrant's Hot Rod Circuit. There's a salient beauty to this album, such as the deftly executed chorus explosions of "Save You," that appear both striking

and surprising. The J Mascis-esque guitar leads of "Cheap Trick" (which has nothing to do with the seminal band, we think) are a sorely missed element dusted off for the tykes here. Stellar dynamics, glowing production, engaging material, pummeling rhythms— these are the characteristics of great albums in this genre. Fortunately, such virtues have been extolled unto Hot Rod Circuit. **Waleed Rashidi**



HOT WATER MUSIC

The New What Next
(Epitaph)

For lack of a better term, the new Hot Water Music record is their most "mature" to date. This album, their eighth full length in what amounts to an exhaustive back catalog of EPs, splits, live albums, and B-sides CDs, is what happens when punk rockers grow up and lose interest. That's not to say this is a bad record, but it just seems that a more appropriate title for this disc would have been "The New Getting Tired," as Hot Water Music has lost most of the edge found on their first four full lengths. The band is reverting towards a more tried and true radio friendly sound, albeit without the sugary hooks of MTV's buzzbin. The album is slower, less groovy and intense, and less dynamic than their earlier, more important works. Then again, at least it's not nü-emo. **Yawwnn. Ross Siegel**



J CHURCH

Society Is A Carnivorous Flower
(No Idea)

The first reaction I got when I put this CD on was, "Who is this,?" and then "Does anyone care anymore?" To answer the first question it's the newest J Church release and to answer the second one, if you don't care then you should. This longstanding Austin-by-way-of-San Francisco band has been blending punk with pop hooks and guitar lines for years now and fans shouldn't be surprised or disappointed with their latest release. Founder Lance Hahn's voice sounds as good as ever and the band, now comprised of Ben Snakepit (of *Snapkit* zine fame!) and a few other recent recruits are as tight if not tighter than any other outfit out there playing this style— and there are tons these days. **Aaron Lefkove**



JIMMY EAT WORLD

Futures
(Interscope)

Interscope Records warns "Unauthorized copying, hiring, lending, public performance and broadcasting prohibited." My only question is why the hell anyone would want to circulate this shit. While Jimmy Eat World's last album, *Bleed American*, took them directly to "the middle," their latest effort is headed straight to the bottom. *Futures* is unmemorable, unenthusiastic, and undeniably boring. Jimmy Eat World has gone from poignant to poppy to purely unimportant. At least their last lackluster album had some catchy tunes that scored them *TRL* exposure and radio play. Jimmy Eat World was never incredibly innovative or groundbreaking, but at least they were fun. Obviously the

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band has not flourished in the limelight, but become complacent. Frontman Jim Adkins sings, "Hey, we've done nothing wrong." I beg to differ. They've created a piece of incredibly irrelevant music that I wasted nearly an hour of my life listening to. Thanks for nothing. **Amy Schuster**



JOSHUA

The Baggage EP
(Engineer)

This is the best EP I have heard since the Jimmy Eat World/Jebediah split was released four years ago. Joshua really doesn't sound like either of those bands—they're more of a mix of The Get Up Kids and Dashboard Confessional—but vocalist/guitarist Dan Coutant, bassist Keith Bogart, and drummer Shane Chikeles have succeeded in creating five songs that won't grow old after a few plays. The CD starts with three new tracks ("A Better Place," "Repetition Forever," and "Perfect Man") that are very reminiscent of The Promise Ring's brand of pop, before breaking into acoustic versions of two songs from the *Singing To Your Subconscious* LP ("What Love Requires" and "Make It Mine"). It's refreshing to see a new emo album hold my interest the way some of my old favorites do. **Matt Neatock**



JULIETTE AND THE LICKS

...Like A Lightning Bolt
(Fiddler)

The funny thing about entertainers is that it seems as if they aren't content with sticking to their preferred trade. Athletes want to rap, hip-hop artists think they can act, and actors deeply believe they are musically inclined. Hey, whatever floats your boat. With that said, there is a myriad of actors who follow that dream and end up making music just to hear themselves on tape. Bruce Willis' blues album and Billy Bob Thornton's recent exploits immediately come to mind. Joined by Todd Morse of H2O on guitar, Patty Schemel of Hole on drums, and veteran Los Angeles musician, Paul III on Bass, Juliette and The Licks have produced a pretty solid rock album. Lewis uses her passion for sweat and blood to give live performances that are comparable to both Iggy Pop and Shirley Manson of Garbage. Like many of the characters she's portrayed on screen, Lewis leaves us wondering if she's there to seduce us or rip our nuts off with her bare hands. While some of her Hollywood peers are biding their time between films sipping cocktails and posing for tabloids at P. Diddy's summer estate, Lewis and her band spent the summer sweating and panting on the Warped Tour. Need I say more? **The Goon**



THE KILLING GIFT

Who Watches The Watchmen?
(Immigrant Sun)

The Killing Gift is the work of esteemed graphic novelist Alan Moore and his haunting illustrative style and one of New Jersey's up and coming hardcore bands. Following in the footsteps of fellow comic book rockers Coheed and Cambria, The Killing Gift represents all that is soaring and fantastic about the current state of emo. One of the only

differences between the two is that while both vocalists sound feminine, one is actually fronted by a female (sorry Claudio). The band's front woman is their forte or, dare I say, gimmick. Without her vocals their sound would be heaped in with the rest of the uninspired emo acts out there. Due to a lack of interesting transitions and segues between their monumental crescendos the album is easier to fall asleep to than to rock out. **Frankie Corva**



KILLRADIO

Raised on Whipped Cream
(Columbia)

A few of you probably stopped reading this review the moment you saw that it was released on a major label. Based on all the punk rock major label disasters over the past few years, I can't say I blame you. But don't have Saves The Day and New Found Glory in the back of your mind when listening to KillRadio. Think of The Clash, who released all of their albums, including the mighty *London Calling*, on Epic. From the opening track, "A.M.E.R.I.K.A.," to the title track—which lyrics include "I can't trust the president / or anything that he says / I can't even trust my own mother / they were both raised the same way"—guitarist/vocalist Brandon Jordan churns out politically defiant lyrics that would make Jello Biafra proud. This is the fast, furious, distortion-filled punk rock of the late '70's for a new generation. KillRadio would be perfect for the Fat Wreck roster, but cheers to Columbia for releasing this new school gem. **Matt Neatock**



LORDS

The House That Lords Built
(Initial)

Bands from Louisville, Kentucky are like ice cream. The reason I make this comparison is the fact that when you get ice cream, no matter how much you don't want it or dislike it, it is still ice cream and it is still damn good. Many would have a difficult time being able to name two or three bands that they dislike from the Louisville area since it seems to be so musically fertile. Lords challenge your love of Fugazi with enough angular guitar work to shake a stick at. Falling somewhere between Drive Like Jehu and Black Cross, the band has a long road ahead of them and it looks to be quite a destructive one at that. Their only problem might be that this is too heavy for hardcore kids to really appreciate and too noisy for others to wrap their heads around. **Ray Harkins**



LOVEDRUG

Pretend You're Alive
(Militia Group)

Yesterday I was in a record store and I remarked to the clerk how dismal it was to look at the piles of used CD's: how many hours and years of inspiration and labor were printed to plastic then just thrown aside to shuffle from the new to crotch to used bin? Similarly, I suspect you'll be able to find more than a few of Lovedrug's latest effort there soon. There shouldn't be a lack of copies, as from the gloss of the recording to the duotone promotional photo on the rear jacket, it's apparent that somebody is

TREVOR DUNN REVISITS MR. BUNGLE'S CALIFORNIA



You may have noticed that this end-of-the-millennium recording was produced in the old fashioned way: analog. What were these idiots thinking? Hey guys, e-mail had already been around for about five years, and ProTools much longer, and you're still linking up two-inch tape machines and ADATs? I wouldn't be complaining as actual instruments recorded onto tape are a thing of beauty, but for Christ's sake, there are so many of them! Instruments, that is. This isn't Radiohead and it doesn't try to be. It's also not *Pet Sounds*, which some would claim an influence. What it does have in common with these, however, and no less true with say, Queen or Oingo Boingo—is the painfully obvious amount of work that went into it. Layers upon layers of meticulous orchestration and arrangement, string quartets, hammered dulcimer, lap-steel guitar, french horn, trumpets, oboe, accordion, tympani...and that doesn't even include the five guys in the band. Granted, listening back to this five years later, it's also obvious that the band is slowly separating into individualistic realms, and perhaps the music suffers as a result. They are not the garage band they used to be, coming up with riffs and snakes of riffs together. A sole arranger, sometimes using another bandmate's idea, but used in a way that a hermetic composer would work, now puts the songs together. What does this mean? I've always thought Mr. Bungle was a band that was too big for its britches and they have claimed themselves to be a "toy band" or a "band pretending not to be a band."

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SELF REVIEW: FEAR BEFORE THE MARCH OF FLAMES



Art Damage (Equal Vision)- Upon hearing the opening track to our new record, *Art Damage*, you may be thinking "when did Fear Before's adolescent balls drop into the mature and grown up band they sound like now?" If you are thinking that you can totally be my friend! Yes, there is a change from our previous efforts with this new disc. While most bands these days are trimming away the hard shell of their music for a more melodic sing-fest, we thought it would be fun to do the exact opposite. So, for this record we went into the studio with legendary producer/engineer Matthew Ellard (Converge, Between The Buried And Me, Motorhead) with the goal of making a fucked up record. We couldn't be happier with the results! Adam Fisher has stepped up the guitar riffing like the little engine that could, while I sing about "doing coke like we're vacuums" and "prying her ribs open and bathing in her chest." You can see why I can't get a girlfriend to save my life. I am still looking though. Honestly, if you have heard us before I think you'll like *Art Damage* a lot, and if you haven't heard us before, now is the perfect time. The album is a very dark and heavy record. There may not be wall-to-wall breakdowns the whole time, but we do things a bit different in our band. See you on tour! **David Marion (vocals)**

FEATURED BAND METALLICA'S MONSTER



Some Kind of Monster EP (Elektra)- Metallica will always hold a special place in fans' hearts. While they had five great albums under their belts—and yes, that includes the *Black Album*—they have sunk to unprecedented lows with each subsequent release. In spite of the last decade or so of their career, fans have stuck by those first five albums. This release accompanies the new Metallica documentary of the same name that hit theatres this past summer. Included are eight tracks, six of which are live versions of Metallica classics like "Damage, Inc." and "The Four Horsemen" culled from a live club appearance in France. The excruciating title track is taken from last year's *St. Anger*, but besides that the band proves that they still can hold it down live with these well-worn classics. One can only hope that this is a sign of things to come from the band and not just a nostalgic blast from the past. **[Aaron Lefkove]**

spending a chunk of change to promote this to those who prefer independent-labeled music that sounds like the same generic uninspired schlock on Clear Channel radio. Choice lyric selection: "If God was on the radio I know he'd say to thee / love is spiders on the edge / and we're hanging by a thread connected to the other end of this twisted frequency I've spun / but I don't care, I'd be happy if you'd share your web with me." Apparently their plan to get this on the radio was to re-write Joan Osborne into a junior-high level simile. Is this what they're teaching at ASCAP Songwriter's Workshop these days? **Matt Tomich**



LARS FREDERIKSEN AND THE BASTARDS

Viking
(Hellcat)

Since the last Rancid album was dominated by Tim's account of his recent divorce, it's refreshing to hear Lars' voice with this, his latest solo release. While *Indestructible* banked on reggae punk rhythms and atmospheric organs a la The Clash, *Viking* is quite the opposite, with its relentless poppy street-punk vibe. Strung together with a few chord progressions and some clever lyrics recalling Lars' life as a drunk, punk, and lover, any song on this album could easily be the soundtrack to a rowdy night of boozing & fighting. Songs like "Switchblade," featuring Skinhead Rob of Boxcar Racer "My Life To Live," featuring Tim Armstrong could act as audio-handbooks for any snort nosed punks who think that just wearing the garb makes you tough and dangerous. "The Viking", the album's closer, serves as a bluesy, slow tempered confession about the trials of tribulations of a man that has risen from the slums to punk rock stardom. This album comes off as a bittersweet account from a man who is still out to cause a little ruckus. **Frankie Corva**



MAPLEWOOD

self-titled
(Tee Pee)

At first listen this is very unexpected from Tee Pee, the label that carved its niche with releases from Bad Wizard, Atomic Bitchwax, and those *A Fistful of Rock And Roll* comps to name a few. While certainly unexpected, Maplewood is very welcomed. An amalgam of classic rock influences ranging from softer David Bowie to Van Morrison to more modern bands like The Shins, Maplewood's debut belongs in a canon of Sunday morning records like *Hunky Dory* and *Moondance*, that are perfect for easing back into life after a long night of cocaine, sex, and overall rock and roll debauchery. In that respect this may be the next logical step for Tee Pee. After all, there is only so much Les Paul and Marshall action one can take before succumbing to the inevitable pitfalls of drug and alcohol excess. **Aaron Lefkove**



THE MELVINS/ LUSTMORD

Pigs of the Roman...
(Ipecac)

The Melvins have 20 or so albums spanning from thrashy punk to drone metal to any other genre they've

invented along the way. When they put out yet another album you can't help but think, "What can these dudes possibly have left to say?" The answer is a lot. On their latest effort, The Melvins team up with noise programmer B. Lustmord who brings a bizarre, creepy element to their already dark sound. *Pigs of the Roman Empire* is mostly instrumental, overtly dynamic, and scary at moments, especially during the 22 minute title track and the voiceovers by Satan on "Safety Third." The sounds and manipulations Lustmord creates conjure up images of everything from boats sinking to insects dying. A record that makes the listener use his or her imagination is surely welcome in this day and age. Again, the record is on the slower side, but Dale Crover picks up the pace here and there. A welcome addition to their lengthy catalog that hopefully won't be eclipsed by the much anticipated Melvins/Jello Biafra collaboration on its way later this year. **Stephen Blackwell**



MINUS THE BEAR

They Make Beer Commercials Like This EP
(Arena Rock)

Ex-Botch shredder Dave Knudson teams up with electro-whizkid Matt Bayles on Minus The Bear's third EP and Arena Rock debut. This EP is an utterly enjoyable listen rife with the danceable pop smarts, great songwriting, and electronica backdrop that has been gaining the band attention since their inception in 2001. Categorizing them along the lines of Midwestern groove addicts The Faint and ambient soul seekers TV On The Radio is more than a fair assessment, although there is certain sadness mixed with humor that differentiates them from the pack. Similar to past efforts, Minus The Bears' songs read like they were taken from a high school ska band's demo tape with titles like "Hey! Is That a Ninja Up There?" and "I'm Totally Not Down With Rob's Alien." Love it or hate it, this certainly adds to the charm of the band. Let's keep our fingers crossed and hope the next release is a full length. **Stephen Blackwell**



MOCK ORANGE

Mind Is Not Brain
(Silverthree)

For long-time Mock Orange fans, the band pre-empt's your questions with what may be their most overtly catchy lead track ever: "With a four year frown / it's hard to get it all back." It has been four years since the band's last major release, and sonically the Mock Orange on this record is barely recognizable from the band that released *Nines & Sixes* or *The Record Play*. Whereas previously the band was the epitome of an aggressive, time-changing emo juggernaut, their newer songs are centered on slide and acoustic guitars and cellos. The band comments that what seems like an abrupt change is the result of a musical progression whose intermediate evolutionary steps were never recorded or released. Regardless, there will undoubtedly be fans of earlier albums those who will feel the lead track's chorus "who turned on the let down / what a sound / watered down" applies to this album's twisted take on mid-tempo, middle-of-the-road-influenced rock.

That description should help you guess whether you will love or hate the band's new sound. **Matt Tomich**



NORTHERN STATE

All City
(Columbia)

The first time around it was cute and some of us welcomed them, supported them, and even laughed with them. Now it's getting old and turning into a silly joke. Northern State is quickly becoming the equivalent of a four year old whose one time funny behavior is irritating and no longer acceptable. Is it really necessary for these hipster princesses to attempt to rhyme? *All City* is a continuation of their first release. Simple beats accompanying meaningless lyrics all brought to you from three girls who have chosen this as a way of putting off getting a real job. I appreciate that Northern State are trying to replicate the very music that they claimed they were raised on, but the newest release from the Beastie Boys more than justifies that need. I'd much prefer to listen to the Yeastie Girlz. **The Goon**



OLD CANES

Early Morning Hymns
(Second Nature)

Old Canes originally started when The Appleseed Cast singer/guitarist Christopher Crisci started playing acoustic shows to make some extra dough while recording in London. Who would've ever thought a weak dollar and a ludicrous exchange rate would be the catalyst for what has turned out to be a great album. Crisci has already showed through endless stylistic changes in The Appleseed Cast that his ability to write great songs isn't limited to just one genre. Merging innumerable Americana influences from bluegrass to river rock, trumpets, banjos, strings, xylophones, and harmonicas fit together seamlessly in a way they haven't since Lullaby For The Working Class. The juxtaposition of the world-weary, yearning vocals and manically strummed acoustic guitars never made porch boredom sound so good. There isn't a clunker to be found on this record. This isn't a side project; this could be a whole new career. **Matt Tomich**



OMAR A. RODRIGUEZ-LOPEZ

A Manual Dexterity...
(GSL)

After one listen to this record, it's clear who's been leading The Mars Volta on their musical voyages to outer space. Anyone who's seen the band or heard their recent live release has been privy to the extended jam versions of their recorded songs. If you are as disappointed in the new direction of The Mars Volta's sound, be wary of this release. The soundtrack to Omar's forthcoming film is a cosmic whirlwind of haunting guitar riffs, sporadic rhythms, and atmospheric effects. One can be lulled into the album just as soon as they can be jolted by a sudden crash of mangled instruments. Certain tracks, such as the Latin flavored "Dues Ex Machina" and "The Palpitations Form A Limit" are amongst the few that have any type of formal structure. I'd

imagine that the songs take on a new significance in the context of the film, but as freestanding works they are a bit too directionless. Shelf it next to your *Dark Side of The Moon* CD and save it for a rainy day and a fat joint. **Frankie Corva**



ONLY CRIME

To The Nines
(Fat Wreck)

I have never been so hesitant to listen to a CD in my entire life. This CD sat on my desk until one day after deadline, because I knew that any band boasting members of the Descendents, Bane, Converge, Black Flag, and Good Riddance could never possibly live up to the list of bands preceding them. While I was right, and I'd easily choose any record by any of the aforementioned bands over *To The Nines*, I was less offended than anticipated. Only Crime has an interesting sound in that they take elements from their musical pasts and combine them into a kind of punk rock that's just a little too edgy to call poppy. Russ Rankin's (Good Riddance) vocals are as you would expect them to be, angry but certainly not screaming, and Bill Stevenson's (Black Flag, The Descendents) drum work is tremendous as usual. I have no complaints about this record but I don't think that there'll be a time where I flip by *Milo Goes To College* to get to this one. **Stan Horaczek**



PAULSON

Variations
(Initial)

Trying to deviate from the patterns set out before them, Paulson attempt to create a spin on what bands like CodeSeven, Failure, and Cave In all have done. The successes of this record lie in their attention to details, especially with regards to the flawless guitar interplay. If done poorly, this style will sound like a jumbled mess of horrible loops and notes that make no sense together or on their own. Since they are a young band and have not had the amount of experience that many have had on the road and in life in general, you can forgive them for moments of disappointment. There's a hit on our hands, it just needs to be polished up a bit. **Ray Harkins**



RIVER CITY HIGH

Extended Play EP
(Doghouse)

East coast rockers River City High have always been a mixed bag of engagement and transparency. Though their lengthy career has been scatterbrained, *Extended Play* can be safely tallied on the more positive end of the band's efforts. Throaty vocals coupled with bouncy melodies present the sonic equivalent of receiving a noogie from your older brother—you're in pain and slightly annoyed, but you know it's all done in good fun. If they were lighter and goofier, they'd be The Mr. T Experience. Any heavier and darker, and Face To Face's Trevor Keith would probably stand and take notice. Still, it's not a bad spot to be lodged and the four-chord progressions are both inoffensive and easy to digest. "Heads & Tails" and "Kiss Me" break up the boom/bap/stick slap of the first three cuts, but "It's Over"

THE DATSUNS REVISIT DAVID BOWIE'S HUNKY DORY



(Virgin: 1971) Bowie has the unique ability to blend the strange, quirky, and surreal with a traditional and clever pop sensibility while delivering with a voice that is all his own. *Hunky Dory* is regarded by many as the start of his greatest song-writing period and is certainly his first truly classic record. As much as Bowie has been a chameleon, changing fashion, image and musical genres with great ease, he has always had the best of taste in producers and musical collaborators to help him fully expand each new direction to its full strength. On *Hunky Dory*, Mick Ronson adds his integral guitar playing and extremely clever arrangements to Bowie's superb songs as Ken Scott begins his relationship as producer that was to continue through Bowie's iconic *Ziggy Stardust* and *Aladdin Sane* periods. *Hunky Dory* is Bowie before the make up, before glam rock truly exploded. This album was the last before he donned a new face, hair, and glitter to help accentuate his new persona. This almost over-shadows this amazing record, which is Bowie stripped of the personalities and media guises that helped make him a superstar. *Hunky Dory* shows his talent laid bare and a collection of songs that add up to one of his musically strongest records. **Dolf deDatsun (bass/vocals)**

FEATURED REVIEW: THE DATSUNS



Outta Sight/Outta Mind (V2)- Of all places, these young rockers hail from New Zealand and judging from their sound New Zealand must have no shortage of used record stores stuffed with everyone's favorite classic rock records. I've heard a lot about these guys but never heard their first record, so I have no idea if they've matured or grown—but I can tell you this second effort is full of great riffs, more importantly great songs, and most importantly, great guitar playing. Where every other band ripping off AC/DC fails because you just can't improve on the simple, groin-grabbing transcendence that is the quintessential AC/DC guitar riff, the Datsuns throw in other influences like Led Zeppelin and a few Beatle-esque choruses to surpass what makes bands like the Supersuckers or Nashville Pussy boring— I can't see those bands writing a song like "Cherry Lane" or "What I've Lost." Quite simply, the Datsuns didn't try to re-write "Highway to Hell" or "Physical Graffiti," but it's still obvious that those records are what makes them tick. I suppose having John Paul Jones of Led Zeppelin produce your record can't hurt either—maybe it was his magic touch that did it. Outta sight indeed. **The Turk**

sounds like 3000 pop-punk numbers we've heard over the past decade. We're still listening and we're still interested. **Waleed Rashidi**



SAINT VITUS
V
(Southern Lord)

Finally one of the hardest of the hard sees a proper reissue. Scott "Wino" Weinrich is the real fucking deal—a self-proclaimed meth addict and the voice and guitars behind the bands Saint Vitus, The Obsessed, and Spirit Caravan—and this is the band where he got his start. Indeed, the entire doom and stoner metal genres owe this band a debt of gratitude, and various members of Fugazi have even gone so far as to say that they never would have gotten together had it not been for Wino. Saint Vitus is the epitome of biker rock—blues riffs, a raspy wail, and songs that highlight the darker sides of humanity. The entire *V* album is re-released in full as well as video footage of Weinrich's first show with the band. This isn't for everybody, but if you have ever had a hankering to drive a Harley, rock a leather jacket, or cook up some crank in your bathtub then I can think of no better soundtrack. **Aaron Lefkove**



SAY ANYTHING
...Is A Real Boy
(Doghouse)

Say Anything's website enthusiastically describes this album as a punk rock musical. Who decided that all music that comes out of California and has even the vaguest hint of energy automatically deserves to have the word "punk" slapped onto it? Regardless, this band is not without its high points. Co-produced by Stephen Trask, who produced *Hedwig and The Angry Inch*—which, like *Rocky Horror* is a real punk rock, or at least glam rock, musical—it has a cohesive flow to it, as any musical should. The band is, for the most part, up to the challenge, with the unfortunate exception of vocalist Max Bemis, whose voice is so devoid of charisma that it brings the whole album down. At its best moments, it recalls the Broadway-esque bravura of Ben Folds' best songs, but never quite touches either the giddiness or cleverness of Mr. Folds. Credit is due to Say Anything for making such a bold move for a new band, but I doubt it will find its desired audience. As a side note, if you're going to name your band after one of the most beloved movies of an entire generation, you really do need try better than this. A band named "The Goonies" or "Heathers" or even "The Breakfast Club" would have to be just good enough to start a musical revolution. **John Brooks**



SHADOWS FALL
The War Within
(Century Media)

Shadows Fall has cemented their position alongside Lamb of God and Mastodon as one of modern metal's finest. Every element of the record, from the double bass onslaughts to the precision of the guitar work, defines this band as a great hope for aggressive music. Where so many bands today

sacrifice soul for the sake of technical masturbation, the members of Shadows Fall display their skills as gifted musicians while still keeping their song structures familiar and memorable. With vocals that invoke the spirit of a young James Hetfield and riffs that would raise the eyebrows of Kerry King, each track is a seamless collection of melodic, crunchy, and downright brutal segments. Hearing these songs live will have fans debating whether to use their fists for pumping or floor punching. All the roots from the hardcore scene that birthed them are present, but developed to a new and refreshing metallic extreme. Fear not, those of you who've become cynical towards heavy music, Shadows Fall are here to pour some gasoline on the fire that devours false metal. **Frank Corva**



SILKWORM
It'll Be Cool
(Touch and Go)

There is something very soothing about Silkworm. It could be their name, which calls to mind images of cute little cartoon worms with innocent smiles of their faces, while spinning webs of satiny fabric. Silkworm's music is much the same. The stories they tell are earnest and interesting and all set to the tune of a band fusing Built To Spill's lazy guitar canvases with Neil Young and maybe even a dose of Mission Of Burma. Sadly, Silkworm are alone. A staple band of Matador for many years, and now Touch and Go, this Montana group plays music that was found *en masse* on college radio in the early '90's. Bands like Dinosaur Jr., R.E.M., and those rock and roll acts coming from the Pacific northwest at the time all are in league with Silkworm. *It'll Be Cool*, their fourth for Touch and Go, is a throwback to the days when bands were more intent on making lazy and honest rock and roll that rolled out of your stereo like poetry, than looking cool. **Ross Siegel**



ELLIOTT SMITH
From A Basement On A Hill
(Anti)

On first listen to Smith's posthumous record, one notices that the lush harmonies, hi-fi recording quality, and waxed-and-buffed sheen of *XO* and *Figure 8* are gone. They are replaced by melancholy, dreamy, and wandering pop tunes that lack the hooks and subtle optimism of his previous efforts. On second listen, you notice songs like "King's Crossing" where we spot crushing harbingers of what's to come in Mr. Smith's life when he cries, "My method acting pays the bills / While it pads the pockets of a fat man in Beverly Hills." Uh, somebody get this man some Prozac. Regardless, Elliott Smith joins Jeff Buckley in pop-star heaven as future Rock and Roll Hall of Famers who created some of the most beautiful pop music this side of Brian Wilson. A life filled with drug addiction, alcohol abuse, and a persona that would make Sylvia Plath seem like a wild and crazy gal, Elliott was clearly a tortured musician—but one that never failed make crushing, powerful, epic, and understated music. This record will grow on you, but enter at your own risk. **Ross Siegel**



THE SNAKE THE CROSS THE CROWN
Mander Salis
(Equal Vision)

Jangly, jagged, and seemingly misguided, *The Snake The Cross The Crown's* wandering repertoire appears a hair too whimsy, a smidge too drab, an inch too bloated. There are brief moments of brilliance and distinct engagement, but they're far too momentary to make much, if any, impact. That's a shame, because this triple-nouned ensemble has the potential to convince the listener of their true staying power—and you know they damn well want to. However, it's just a classic case of exhausting too many resources in too many locations. Where's that bottle of Ritalin when you need it? **Waleed Rashidi**



STIFF LITTLE FINGERS
Guitar And Drum
(Kung-Fu)

Wow! I've restarted this album from the act that got nicknamed "The Irish Clash" three times and I am still under the floorboards trying to get the opening track out of my head. I relish hearing old acts that put out new records as it's an unusual test of talent, but this record is really a surprise that's up there with the last Buzzcocks record. Stiff Little Fingers have been pumping out live records and miscellaneous releases since the late '80's, which was already years after their classic first three albums. Not only does the first track straight out flatten you with tuneful, ringing melodic punk, the second track, "Strummerville," is a apt tribute to the fallen Clash frontman and the third, "Can't Get Away With That," is a hooky wedge of power-pop that was miraculously not written by former Jam and current SLF bassist Bruce Foxton. This is not typical of a reunion act, but rather one of the best written albums of the realm of aged punks who refuse to stop pushing forward. Read the lyrics to this, as it's one of the bulletproof releases of 2004. **du proserpio**



STRAYLIGHT RUN
self-titled
(Victory)

Don't you hate it when the coming attractions to a movie end up being the best parts of the film itself? In the spirit of load blowing previews and lackluster debuts comes Straylight Run. Seven or eight months ago, the band posted four free tracks on their website. The songs created a buzz amongst fans and industry alike in no time flat. Also, the fact that half of Straylight Run is composed of ex-Taking Back Sunday members—including John Nolan, former TBS hit maker—was only more incentive for an indie/emo fan base to listen up. Now, in the wake of the new Taking Back Sunday release, comes this much-anticipated album. What it has to offer is re-recorded versions of the aforementioned website songs surrounded by filler tracks chock full of droning and sleep inducing arrangements. Where simple four-chord balladry can be made interesting through thoughtful arrangement and heightened by clever lyrics, Straylight Run does neither. Instead, most of the tracks come off as amateur and boring, which is a surprise, since someone who

has already proven himself as a master songwriter penned them. If you've heard the free tracks, the previews, courtesy of the band's website, then you're privy to this album's high points. I would advise against spending your money on the feature presentation. **Frank Corva**



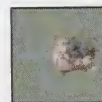
SUNN 0)))
White2
(Southern Lord)

Sunn 0))) is a side project featuring Greg Anderson of Goatsnake and Stephen O'Malley of Khanate trying, as usual, to take their heavy and slow style to a newer, gloomier conclusion. This project is largely influenced by Earth, one of the most obscure and celebrated of the intensely slow, crushing doom acts—a genre which is pretty obscure to begin with. The minimal slow drone of "HELL-0)))—WEEN" maintains a moderate rumble (for just under 15 minutes, it aptly serves as an intro), and the eerily ethereal "bassAliens" meanders through a dark mood that calls to mind a spaceship in one of the better *Alien* movies. It's not much of a surprise that this nightmarish, 23-minute electronic noise-tinged track is dedicated to electro-music visionary Wendy Carlos. For those that think this type of stuff is only for weeded-out types, this track alone is a monstrous *object-d'art* that demands a real listen. The third and longest track showcases Attila Csihar from Mayhem singing ancient Indian Vedic text over a sweeping, hellish black hole of noise. This is not for everyone, it packs a wallop for those that are looking for it. **du proserpio**



SWINGIN' UTTERS
Live In A Dive
(Fat Wreck)

The Utters are one of the better mainline streetrock acts in the country and they sound almost as good here as they do in a studio setting—that is, if not better. This release gives us 23 tracks, including a cover of Cock Sparrer's "I Got Your Number" and Stiff Little Fingers' "Here We Are Nowhere," a good acoustic folk-punk track, and some great banter and talkback with the audience. These guys have certainly earned it for themselves with their tuneful anthems and a drive that seems endless. The Scooby-Doo story in the liner notes is pretty damn good as well. Overall this is a charming package, chock full of quality. **du proserpio**



THE SWORDS PROJECT
Entertainment Is There If...
(Arena Rock)

Combining guitars, bass, and two drum kits with electronics, strings, and even an accordion, The Swords Project have somehow managed to create a collection of incredibly moody and atmospheric songs. Like electronic contemporary John Hughes III, their music, at first, comes off as quirky, but after a closer listen, listeners begin to uncover layer upon layer of musical complexity that take more than a single sit-through to absorb. Once fully processed, however, as varied as their talents are, each and every member's contributions serve to make the end product that much stronger. Notable examples include

"Cocktails And Shuttles," whose haunting guitars, whispering vocals, and lingering strings give this track a tragic, desperate feel and "Immigracion," a song that possesses a big, booming flare thanks to the band's unmistakable combination of electronics, guitars, and strings. **Dean Ramos**



TAKING BACK SUNDAY
Where You Want To Be
(Victory)

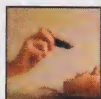
Thousands of kids waited, hearts on their sleeves, for Taking Back Sunday's highly anticipated sophomore album. With the loss of founding members Shaun Cooper (bass) and John Nolan (guitar/vocals), all bets were off. Fortunately for the revamped Taking Back Sunday, *Where You Want to Be* doesn't disappoint. Laced with lovelorn lyrics and escalating guitar riffs, the album remains true to the formula that made the band emo darlings. Dueling vocals from frontman Adam Lazzara and guitarist Fred Mascherino, mangled growls, and graceful melodies, all add texture and tension. The band exerts finer control over the music, confirming that their skills surpass all the cookie-cutter screamo bands. The more polished *Where You Want to Be* is radio friendly, but that should be expected when you befriend the radio the way Taking Back Sunday has. The new album seeks commercial success, but not without irony. "You're the poster boy / their selling point / the focus for their new campaign / something has to be done," sings Lazzara. You can tell all your friends about *Where You Want to Be*, but chances are they already know.

Amy Schuster



TERROR
One With The Underdogs
(Trustkill)

Trustkill is such a hot label right now that it seems like the hardcore community devours anything they put out. This prompts one to think about the label's history and re-discover the bands and releases that put Trustkill on the map. Upon re-visiting records like Harvest's *Transitions* and Poison The Well's *The Opposite Of December*, one's reminded of how acts like these gave hardcore a drastic makeover and swiftly broadened its horizons. Listening to recent Trustkill releases like Open Hand and ArmsBendBack hardly stirs the same emotions. Overproduction has deafened the personality that so many of the label's releases once had. In the case of the new Terror record, it's unpretentious, old-school-hardcore-meets-new-school-breakdowns all the way. The style definitely has the potential to inspire some nasty pits. Its thick production actually works to its advantage, giving it some extra crunch to nod your head to. Although the record relies heavily on the styles that bands like Hatebreed and Stretch Arm Strong have made popular, it still retains its own unique attitude. Compared to other aggressive records released recently, this is at least a step in the right direction for both hardcore and Trustkill. **Frankie Corva**



THESE ARMS ARE SNAKES

Oxeneers of The Lion...
(Jade Tree)

If last year's *This Is Meant To Hurt You* EP caused scenesters to stir, expect the first full length from These Arms Are Snakes to blow their trucker hat-clad minds. Although they've got hardcore and prog-metal pedigrees (members have done time in Kill Sadie and Botch), the Seattle collective scraps their heavier tendencies to create a whirlwind of hard-hitting post-punk rife with angular rhythms, sweltering melodies, and singer Steve Snere's throaty yelps. *Oxeneers* teems with blistering, fuzz-drenched guitar anthems like opening salvo "The Shit Sisters", atmospheric ballads ("Your Pearly Whites") and spacey musical interludes ("Gadget Arms"). Akin to their like-minded (and geographical) counterparts the Blood Brothers, Pretty Girls Make Graves, and Minus The Bear, These Arms Are Snakes are another Seattle band that truly deserves the hype. **Tracey John**



TREEPHORT

Enchanted Forest
(Springman)

Treephort is a difficult band to tackle. It's not easy to criticize a band that doesn't know the meaning of "taking oneself too seriously." They write ridiculous punk with pop flair (and I'm not talking about pop-punk, I'm talking about punk with pop flair) so they sound more like the Ramones and Lemonheads than Green Day. The song titles speak for themselves, like "The Only Artist You'll Ever Be Is A Sandwich Artist," about some dumb rich girl they go to school with who writes bad poetry, or "Jesus Would Play This Show For Free," about how Jesus wouldn't complain about the price of bottled water and how "Jesus would take most Christian bands / and place them in his mouth / then he would spit them out." Even their more mean-spirited moments, which admittedly account for about 75% of the album, are so tongue-in-cheek in their delivery that one is inclined not to hold it against them but compelled to laugh right along. Any attempt to dislike Treephort for all their weirdness and slander would be an exercise in futility, so don't bother.

John Brooks



UNEARTH

The Oncoming Storm
(Metal Blade)

When I saw Killswitch Engage up there on the *Billboard* charts alongside Jay-Z and Maroon 5, I was surprised. When I saw that Unearth, the once very sloppy Massachusetts metal-core outfit, made it to the top 200, I was shocked. *The Oncoming Storm* keeps with the band's tradition of floor-shaking breakdowns and exhausting compositions, but breaks free from the shoddy production of previous recordings. With Adam Dutkiewicz from Killswitch Engage behind the mixing board, Unearth has developed into a serious metalcore band that actually deserves the success that they are receiving. Some fans of the older material are sure to say that this album is overproduced but that's mostly because you lose DIY credibility

for using more than one microphone in the studio. At the rate things are going right now, Unearth's next record might just break the *Billboard* top 10, or better yet, outsell Limp Bizkit's next record and cause Fred Durst to blow his brains out. Then everybody wins! **Stan Horaczek**



TOM WAITS

Real Gone
(Anti)

After a career spanning three decades, it appears Tom Waits can record just about anything he wants and please his fans while gaining more along the way. There is nothing pretty or melodic about this record as a whole, so if you're waiting for an album full of beauties like "Hold On" or "Downtown Train" you'll have to look elsewhere. *Real Gone* is a percussive record, many of the beats are provided by vocal sounds that Waits creates as opposed to having a drummer— and if you saw *Coffee and Cigarettes*, you know telling him he needs a drummer is a bad idea. Waits' signature growl laces every track with few exceptions. As always, his lyrics are meaningful and stand as powerful poetry on their own. The album's closing track, "Day After Tomorrow," is gorgeous and proves that Waits' experimentation is no sign of him losing the ability to write a beautiful tune. **Stephen Blackwell**



THE WITNESSES

Tunnel Vision
(Howler)

Combining the best of Ike and Tina with the Stones circa *Exile on Main St.* (I know, it's a bold claim), The Witnesses have been tearing up New York City and the east coast for the better part of the last three years and proving that they are not just another good-looking "The" band. This, their debut full-length, is packed with all the soul and roll you'd expect. With five instrumentalists who all contribute vocals, the band calls to mind the roaring soul and R&B reviews of decades past but with an updated take, and while fashion has come before function with so many bands these days, they've incorporated both without letting one eclipse the other. The Chuck Berry-esque rockers are what the band initially cut their teeth with, but their slower numbers—especially the ones where keyboardist Bonnie Bloomgarden takes the mic—are what stand out on this album. Pick this up! **Aaron Lefkove**



WOLF EYES

Burned Mind
(Sub Pop)

Sometime in 2003, three skinny white kids from Detroit wrote the soundtrack for a horror movie called *America* and entitled it *Burned Mind*. Wolf Eyes are commonly regarded as the figurehead of the American noise movement and with good reason. *Burned Mind* is roughly 39 minutes of pure sludge, drone, and noise with the odd screamed or eerily whispered vocal line stitched in. This record has a fantastic, imaginative quality to it that has been absent in rock music since the early '90's, and it's no small wonder people are beginning to call noise the "new grunge." The song titles are disgusting and actually

correlate with how the music sounds, most emphasized on "Rattlesnake Shake" and "Ancient Delay." All in all, this record sounds like somebody dying— and painfully at that. **Stephen Blackwell**



YESTERDAYS RISING

When We Speak, We Breathe EP
(Fearless)

Fearless is as high on this group as a bunch of youngsters with a balloon filled with nitrous. A visit to the label's website sees the teenagers labeled as "leaders," and a band that will "change the face of music." I'm not sure I'd go that far, but if you put Yesterdays Rising next to The Used, A Static Lullaby, and other acts that were supposed to change the face of music two years ago, you'd be pretty pissed that those other bands are so rich right now and this band is virtually unknown. The fact that it's an EP helps keep this from dragging on, but the five tracks on this CD contain more variety, poignancy, and volume than most hardcore bands include on 10-plus song full-lengths. It's too early to say, but this band could be the best thing to happen to Fearless since At The Drive-In. **Matt Neatock**



ZAO

The Funeral of God
(Ferret)

In the band's eight-year history, it seems that Christian metalcore outfit Zao has had more members than Jesus had disciples. The band's situation appeared to be at its worst when their contract with Solid State expired and the only remaining original member, drummer Jesse Smith, jumped ship. Nevertheless, Zao persisted. Now with a new label and drummer Steven Peck in tow, the band—rounded out by singer Dan Weyandt, bassist Sean Koschik, and co-guitarists Scott Mellinger and Russ Cogdell—are ready to move on with their latest release. The "funeral of God," you say? Don't worry loyal Zao fans, the band has not given up their faith. On the contrary, *Funeral* is a concept album that ponders what would happen if "God decided humanity has rejected Him so completely that He just...disappeared." However, while the subject matter is weightier than most bands care to tackle, the music fails to measure up to their metalcore peers, or even their past efforts: *Funeral* uninterestingly chugs along with cheesy, repetitive riffs, uniform drum beats, and Weyandt's monotone snarls. Clearly sung back-up vocals occasionally surface to mix things up a little, but overall, Zao's sound isn't as incendiary as the ideas they're trying to express. Those who were looking for a musical epiphany in a newly resurrected Zao are going to be sorely disappointed.

Tracey John

HOMETOWN HEROS

metal john

For those of you that have not had the pleasure of experiencing a Metal John performance, imagine this: a regular looking guy takes the stage by himself, straps on a guitar, and begins to shred like you've never seen anyone shred before. He plays unaccompanied guitar pieces at maximum volume that have to be seen to be believed. Between songs, he likes to banter with the audience and introduce songs like "Doomhammer," "The War in Heaven," and "Torn," which he explains "is about sorrow and rage, but mostly about rage." Metal John is doing something truly original and groundbreaking in the metal world, making it necessary to sit down with the man and find out what makes him tick.

Metal John. Is that just your stage name or has it become your actual name?

Actually it was my nickname for a while.

So people were like, "Oh he likes metal, so he's Metal John?"

Yeah, because pretty much all I listen to is metal, and a friend of mine was explaining to someone who I was versus her other friend who was John from Ohio.

But you're from New York, right?

Born and raised.

If you were from somewhere else do you think you'd play metal differently?

I guess if I had grown up in suburbia I would have been more into the traditional suburban metalhead routine: Metallica, Anthrax, that kind of stuff. There are a bunch of record stores here that have a lot of hard to find underground imports, so maybe I got into thrash, death, or black metal more easily and that had an influence on me. I'm also down with classical music. I really like baroque.

That probably had a strong influence on your music then.

Yeah, the way classical composers put stuff together. The music helps you visualize what the story is about, and that's kinda what I try to do.

Why just you? Why not a whole band?

Well, I just wanted to do something completely new. I was sick of the traditional band format and I got tired of dealing with idiots who can't get their act together. It's almost impossible to find people who have the same mindset and just want to do exactly what I want to do. Plus, I've just always been into it when Eddie [Van Halen] would do the unaccompanied solo, or when Tony Iommi would come out and do the unaccompanied solo. That was always my favorite part of the shows. So I thought, "What if I just do a whole show like that but without all the wanking, just unaccompanied guitar pieces?"

I've seen you several times live, and I've noticed that while you're really serious about your music, you also have some pretty funny introductions to your songs and tongue-in-cheek song titles. Is there a reason for that?

All I can say is that I take my playing very seriously. I'm very serious about the songs, playing well, having good technique, and performing well. But it's still gotta be fun.

People definitely seem to respond to that and get into it.

Who wants to go to a show and see some dude solo up there with an attitude and be like, "I'm just gonna blow you away with my chops." That's no fun. You gotta get the crowd into you and make that connection with the audience.

I remember at one show you mentioned that you had retired the devil horns and that it was all about the "fist of metal." Is that true?

Absolutely.

The devil horns are for pussies, huh?

[Laughter] No, but at several shows I've instructed the audience, "The devil horns are dead. Please only raise the fist of metal." Because, unless you're at a Ronnie Dio show, that's really the only place you should be throwing the devil horns up. 'Cause I've seen people at Hilary Duff shows throwing up the devil horns.

What were you doing at a Hilary Duff concert?

I wasn't there, it was on TV, but it was all these kids throwing up the devil horns. So you think the devil horns have been corrupted, diluted, and watered

down?

Absolutely. They don't mean anything anymore.

Are there any specific goals you have?

Yo, I just want to go on tour. Blow up Ozzfest someday, whatever I can do.

Awesome. You know what I think? The drunken maniacs at Ozzfest would fuckin' love you. They'd go crazy.

I just wanna go worldwide. Get on the road and show people what's up.

The other thing that struck me the first time I saw you was how you just look like a normal dude.

No one would know from looking at you at you that you play metal until you strap on a guitar, plug in, and shred.

It's all about the music. The whole long-haired metal cliché to me is done. You know, it's 2004. Let's do something new. I'm trying to reach the masses, bring it to everybody. It's not something I really thought about, but you know, I'm just a regular dude who drops the metal hammer.

That's the quote right there. Any final words?

Just go to metaljohn.com and find out when my next show is. Rock on! 🍌



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